■ Lifestyle
In praise of an unsubsidized orchestra

■ Business
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RP risks new credit-rating downgrade

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Artists turn out 'for a special friend'

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PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Monday, September 20, 2004 ● 48 pages / vol. 19 / no. 283

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Militant lawmakers decry cut in their pork barrel

By Carlos Pablo

Banks owe gov't ₱38B in back taxes

Foreign currency loans next focus of tax drive

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

A DIVE Palmas resort diver guides tourists to a coral bed where colorful fish abound near Arrecefit Island in Palawan, which is now largely patronized by South Korean honeymooners.

Unrest scenario over new taxes may be alarmist

By Armando Doronila

ANALYSIS

Koreans revive resort laid low by terror

Lawmaker urges legalized 'jueteng' to ease fiscal crisis

By Frank Cimatu
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BELIEVERS at victims of martial law attend the mass arrangean Ferdinand Marcos declared 32 years ago, light candles and offer flowers in memory of their loved ones before a new monument at the Plaza Liberasyon in Baño City

Monument honors victims of martial law

By Homer P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

PNP task force targets political armies in Abra

By Artha Kira Panotes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

A3
WEATHER FORECAST

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2004

Second FRONTPAGE

DOF backs ₱1-₱2 cigarette tax hike

By Carlos Pablo

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance has endorsed proposals in Congress to increase taxes on cigarettes by ₱1 to ₱2 per pack in a bid to plug loopholes in revenue collections on these so-called "sin products."

A ₱1-per-pack increase in taxes on cigarettes is expected to raise ₱9 billion in additional revenues for the cash-strapped government, which is counting on the break of a fiscal crisis.

The DOF made the endorsement in a hearing last week by the House ways-and-means committee which also tackled oil companies in the wake of calls for probes into alcohol and liquor, after swapping tax deliberations on the proposed tax amnesty bill.

4-tiered system

Rep. Mitchelle Liharan (NPC, Eastern Samar) noted that the government was losing revenues in the current two-tiered system for tobacco products in which taxes varied per price bracket.

This means that under the current system, the lower the price of a cigarette brand, the lower is its tax. This has resulted in the proliferation of cheaply priced cigarette brands.

Shift to cheaper brands

"It can be readily seen that the current system has resulted in a shift of consumption to lower priced brands and has predictably encouraged many factories to introduce brands that would fall under the lowest tax classification," Liharan said.

Liharan is the author of House Bill No. 3755 which seeks to slap a uniform ₱1 per pack tax on all cigarette products.

"With a unit specific increase uniformly applied across all tiers, the government will reap fairly all incremental revenues despite possible changes in consumption patterns in favor of the low tax tier brands," Liharan said.

Rep. Crispin Remulla (NP, Cavite) has proposed a higher tax of ₱2 per pack.

Uniform increase

The ₱1-per-pack tax increase is contained in Remulla's House Bill No. 3871, which provides for a uniform tax increase would discourage further consumption shifts in favor of low-tax brands.

"Government will surely collect the incremental value of ₱1 per pack notwithstanding any down trading which may present," Remulla said.

Automatic hikes

Remulla noted that with the country's current consumption volume of 43 billion packs of cigarettes per year, the ₱1 tax would result in additional revenues of ₱9 billion.

The Liharan and Remulla bills also provide for automatic increases in tax rates every two years based on inflation adjusted-average rates.

DOF officials led by Finance Undersecretary Grace Tan told members of the House ways and means committee that the adoption of a uniform tax on all tobacco products was consistent with the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

Effective deterrent

The FCTC is an international agreement which the Philippines is a signatory, that was crafted by the World Health Organization.

The FCTC treaty noted that price and tax measures are an effective and important means of reducing tobacco consumption, particularly among young persons.

New GOCC execs must waive perks—Mitra

By Carlos Pablo

NEW APPOINTEES to government-owned and -controlled corporations and government financial institutions must be required to sign waivers against entitlement perks for themselves, a congressman urged yesterday.

Rep. Abraham Mitra (LP, Mindoro) proposed in deliberating the adoption of the executive order to the financial excesses of executives at GOCCs and GFIs.

Mitra also recommended the publication in newspapers of the low salaries of the so-called "fat cats" in compliance with President Macapagal-Arroyo's Administrative Order No. 180.

"Applicants for board seats in any firm should sign a vow renouncing more perks fitting their names and to keep benefits only in the limits set by President Arroyo," Mitra said.

He said that "promissory note in cash" should be a prerequisite for appointment.

"There should be a perks holiday," Mitra said. "After all, those are not the licenses or the Gates of the world but mostly people who are asking for just elevation backpay."

Pro Imissaer, Mitra questioned if appointees to the Government Service Insurance System who replaced Estrada appointees last July 1 had climbed their belief in.

Another congressman also resigned his rights on the GSIS.

Rep. Imee Marcos (NPC-Ilocos Norte) suggested that Congress investigate the delay in the release of CHED pension checks to thousands of retired government employees.

Tañagon noted that CHED secretary Sisi has reported to be among the highest paid NYSC and CFI officials.

Tañagon also cited complaints by employees of the House of Representatives who were having trouble sending of loans from the GSIS.

"These are the very same people who religiously paid their contributions over the years but failed to get financial relief during their trying times," Tañagon said.

Tañagon filed House Resolution No. 235 which aims to scrutinize the finances of the CHED.

Previous studies had claimed that salary-related measures were instituted, the DOH would have no more funds to meet its obligations in two to three years, according to the Pangasinan lawmaker.

"GSIS members have the right to know the actual status of GSIS finances, since their hard-earned money is government service liable up the state pension fund," Tañagon said.

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ASUS SERVICE CENTERS

'Graft squealers' to get big rewards

By Christine O. Avendaño

SQUEAL on a grafter, get a reward.

Administration Sen. Mar Roxas has filed a bill that would make whistle-blowing safe and financially profitable.

Senate Bill No. 1701 will offer cash rewards that could go as high as ₱10 million. "Graft squealers," as Roxas labelled them, refers to anyone who uncovers and divulges corrupt practices or acts of graft in government.

The bill also guarantees "protection against disciplinary action or reprisals" and, just as important, "bodily security."

In a statement, Roxas said this reward system would motivate and embolden informers, especially since there was no such measure currently in place.

On the contrary, at least one celebrated case had the whistle blower tagged as a rumor on nationwide television. Arsa Ministries, the Land Bank cashier who exposed a ₱283 million tax diversion scheme two years ago, was subsequently able to clear her name, but only after much torment and inconvenience to herself and her family.

The bill is the new senator's fourth anti-corruption measure. It gives a ₱10-million reward to anyone who puts down the president, the highest official in the land, with proof of corrupt activities. If the grafter caught is the Vice President, the squealer gets ₱7 million; if it's a member of Congress, ₱5 million.

Remarks ranging from ₱3 to ₱5 million are promised those who would tell on other public officials—Cabinet secretaries, justices, military and police generals and chief executives of government-owned and -controlled corporations—and government employees.

In cases of plunder, ill-gotten wealth, bribery and indictable sins, the prize will be computed at 10 percent of the amount recovered in the final court disposition. For the graft cases, informers will get a sum directly proportional to the salary grade of the most senior respondent.

Roxas' bill also provides that while the case is pending in court, the squealer may be allowed the sum equal to not less than 25 percent of the reward due.

SC orders Cabinet heads to answer senators' petition

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE SUPREME Court on Friday ordered nine Cabinet members to explain why they should not be removed from their posts after opposition senators questioned their appointments in "acting" secretaries.

"The court resolved, without giving due course to the petition, to require the respondents to comment thereon within 10 days from notice," the clerk of court said in a one-page resolution.

The respondents were Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Finance Head Undersecretary Antonio Cruz Abdon, Michael Defensor (environment and natural resources), Joseph Durano (tourism), Raul Gonzalez (justice), Alberto Romulo (foreign affairs), Rene Villa (agrarian reform) and Arthur Yap (agriculture).

The SC resolution was dated Sept. 14 but was only released Friday. Justices Carolina Grino-Aquino and Minita Chico-Nazario did not participate in the deliberations since they were on leave.

Senate Minority Floor Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and members of the Senate minority bloc on Sept. 6 asked the high court to nullify the respondents' appointments for allegedly being unconstitutional.

They said the nine "acting" secretaries took their oaths of office although they had not been confirmed by the Commission on Appointments (CA). Until the end of the CA's regular session, the appointees were merely "designated" and would not be able to take their oaths of office, much less perform their duties, they said.

Aside from Pimentel, the other petitioners were Senators Edgardo Angara, Juan Ponce Enrile, Luisa Ejercito Estrada, Jinggoy Estrada, Panfilo Lacson, Alfredo Lim, Aquilino Madrigal and Sergio Osmeña III.

They said the Constitution authorizes only the appointment of "officers-in-charge" in the event of a vacancy. A vacancy in the office of a department secretary could be filled by the designation of an undersecretary.

"The President and her subordinates in the executive department apparently suffer from a propensity to take legal shortcuts in their efforts to circumvent the problems afflicting the nation," the petitioners said.

They said that the President, by issuing the appointments, was "clearly" trying to evade scrutiny. Pimentel duly that prohibition has created a chilling impact on all midnight appointments to Cabinet members while Congress was in session.

If acting appointments were to be allowed, it would then be possible for a President to appoint an entire secretary of a number of years, removing it every two, without ever having to submit the acting appointment to the CA for confirmation, the petitioners said.

Officer holding up PNP revamp

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE MASSIVE revamp at the Philippine National Police may not be completed until after one of its most controversial officers retires on Nov. 30.

PNP Director General Edgar Aglipay is waiting for Director Eduardo Matillano to retire in order to accommodate Chief Supt. Reynaldo Wells, who purportedly single-handedly caused the delay in the revamp, a top PNP official told the Inquirer yesterday.

Matillano heads the Department of Investigation and Detective Management (DIDM), while Wells is regional police director of Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon).

"He's (Aglipay) just waiting for Matillano," said the official who was privy to the deliberations of the PNP Senior Officers Placement and Promotions Board (SOPPB).

As agreed upon by the SOPPB, the source said Wells would take over the DIDM after Matillano retires in Nov. 30.

But Wells reportedly did not want to leave the much sought after position of Calabarzon police director and he left with no assignment while awaiting Matillano's retirement.

Last Monday, he was supposed to turn over the Calabarzon post to Chief Supt. Arturo Lomibao, Criminal Investigation and Detection Group director.

But Aglipay, according to last-minute lobbying by Wells and some purportedly influential leaders, postponed the turnover, according to a PNP source.

The Inquirer could not reach Wells or his cellular phone.

Wells's supposed move has had a domino effect on the top-to-bottom revamp. Aglipay had envisioned to make the 114,000-strong national police force more professional and efficient.

Besides keeping Lomibao from the key Calabarzon post, it has also kept Chief Supt. Jesus Verzosa in the Bicutan Verzosa, the former Intelligence Group director who was picked over the escape of Indonesian terrorist Fathur Rohman al-Ghozi last year, was supposed to replace Lomibao as CIDG chief.

Aglipay, meanwhile, has decided to ignore the court petition filed by Cavite board lawyers Roque Antonio Jr. and Nicolas Alvarez questioning his six-month extension.

"I will not be disturbed by any case filed against me," he said. "I will remain focused on serving the public. I serve at the pleasure of the President."

In a 35-page petition filed with the Court of Appeals, Antonio and Alvarez argued that the term "pleasure" was faulty, explaining that the President could extend the terms of the PNP chief and the armed forces chief of staff only in times of war and other emergencies.

As the date Aglipay was granted a term extension, neither could be extended, they said.

Payumo welcomes Senate probe of Subic

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority Chair Felicito Payumo yesterday said he would welcome any investigation into alleged car smuggling in the freeport.

"I'm for a full-blown inquiry on claims that there is smuggling of right-hand drive and second-hand vehicles here," Payumo told the Inquirer.

He was reacting to Sen. Richard Gordon's plans to ask the Senate to investigate the SBMA on the alleged car smuggling.

Payumo said the investigation should also include the charges against Gordon, a former SBMA chair, citing the P854 million in expenses that the Commission on Audit had disallowed during Gordon's term at the SBMA.

Payumo urged the senator to reveal his real motive for the investigation. "Is he really after the right-hand drive and second-hand vehicles or after me?" he asked.

Gordon had questioned Payumo's salary and other allowances, citing data from the COA showing the SBMA chair was paid P2.6 million last year alone.

Payumo, however, said he only received P91,750 monthly. Of this, P31,543 is deposited in a trust fund for the scholarship of children and cultural minorities of Subic, Bataan and Zambales, he said.

He said part of his salary also goes to the payment of various fees, taxes and contributions as the Bureau of Internal Revenue, the Government Service Insurance System and Philhealth, among others.

Payumo said the SBMA pay retirement plan covered the annual salaries and benefits of all SBMA officials even within the limits of Section 2 of Memorandum Order No. 20 issued on June 21, 2001. This specifies that the "actual pay package" shall not exceed twice the standardized rates for comparable national government positions.

"The reduction in my salary and other benefits from P2,154,480 to P1,909,800 per year has been effected, bringing down my total salary and benefits to twice the salary of a department secretary," he said.

The number of SBMA board meetings has been reduced from thrice to twice a month, he said, adding that the board members' monthly per diems had been cut from P60,000 to P30,000. Allen Macasero, PhilStar Central Luzon Desk

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			Updates & Considerations in the Securities Law - (1:15 pm - 2:15 pm (1 CU)	Justice Reginaldo L. Hautea
	AM Session	Oct. 9, 2004 Saturday	Updates in Remedial Law - 9:15 am (2 CU)	Dean Ed Vincent S. Alinio
			Int. Civil Proc. (10:15 am - 11:15 am (1 CU)	Justice Noel L. Tijam
	PM Session		Civil Law/Labor - 1:1 pm (3 CU)	Justice Edilberto G. Sandoval
			International & Domestic Arbitration - (1:15 pm - 4:15pm (3 CU)	Dean Custodio O. Parlade
	AM Session	Oct. 16, 2004 Saturday	Administrative & Agreements - 9:15 am (2 CU)	Prof. Mario E. Valderrama
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	PM Session		Updates in Land Registration - 1:1 pm (3 CU)	Justice Hector L. delos Santos
			Updates in Labor Law - 1:15 pm - 4:15 pm (3 CU)	Dean Froilan M. Bacungan
	AM Session	Oct. 23, 2004 Saturday	Land Titles (9:15 am (2 CU)	Justice Hugo E. Gutierrez, Jr.
			SEC/Civil Proc. (Intra-Corporate Controversies) - 10:15 am - 11:15 am (1 CU)	Prof. Harry L. Roque, Jr.
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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2004

Romulo to assure UN of RP support for Iraq

By TJ Burgonio

THE PHILIPPINE will reiterate its commitment to the reconstruction of Iraq, among other things, during the upcoming United Nations General Assembly, Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said.

Romulo left Manila yesterday morning for New York to attend the UN meeting, which is also expected to make proposals to increase the number of permanent and non-permanent members of the UN Security Council.

"I guess we have to make sure that we stay support for the United Nations and its continuing importance to the world and the Philippines," Romulo told the Manila Overseas Press Club Friday night.

The Philippines is a non-permanent member of the Security Council. Ambassador Lauro Baja Jr. is the country's permanent representative to the UN.

"In the United Nations, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, we're bringing a reserve power," Romulo said.

He said he would meet with UN Secretary-Gen. Kofi Annan and his counterparts from other UN member countries to discuss related concerns "always with our foreign policy" in mind, which he said was premised on the national interest.

"In his talk with Annan, he will reiterate the country's commitment to rebuild Iraq, among other things," said Gilberto Asuncion, foreign affairs spokesperson.

On several occasions, the Philippines had declared its commitment to help in the reconstruction of Iraq under the auspices of the UN.

But Romulo ruled out anew the deployment of Filipino troops in the war-torn country.

"Even in March 2003, we discussed sending combat troops, and when we met with the humanitarian assistance, that was in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1546. That was the terms of reference," he said.

The Philippines sent a 96-member humanitarian contingent to Iraq last year, but pulled out the remaining 52 men in July to save the life of a Filipino truck driver who was abducted and threatened with beheading by Iraqui militants.

Proposals to increase the number of permanent and non-permanent members to the council are part of the agenda of the UN meeting, according to Romulo.

Romulo also said that his capacity to meet with US President George W. Bush, who is hosting a reception for the delegates on the fringes of the UN affair.

But he declined to give details about the message he would convey to the US President during their meeting.

Romulo stressed that Manila and Washington "could work together" even though the first was "hurt" over the withdrawal of peacekeepers from Iraq by July, a month ahead of schedule.

He also said that Philippines could not afford to "bypass" Manila now because the three million Filipinos in the US are an "emerging political force."

"Especially on a close race, you must remember that a few thousand votes could have made President Bush win the presidential election against John Kerry[sic]. In a tight election, the United States realizes this," he said.

Bush is seeking reelection in November against Democratic challenger Sen. John Kerry.

Correction

THE HEADLINE of the story about the Baguio Country Club and Secretities and Exchange Commission case that appeared on Page A27 yesterday should have read "Appeals court sees SEC may not interfere in Baguio Country Club elections," not "Appeals court says SEC may interfere in Baguio Country Club elections."

* * *

Readers may send their requests for corrections to the Inquirer Ombudsman, Inquirer Building, 5th Floor, 40 Chino Roces Ave. Extension, Makati City (tel. nos. 897-0700 to 10; e-mail: ombudsman@inquirer.com.ph; and ombudsman@inq7.net).

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity must be sent to Saul Pelaeiro, readers' advocate, the same address and tel. numbers or e-mail: readers@inquirer.com.ph.

AN OPEN LETTER

TO:— PRESIDENT GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO, EDUCATION SECRETARY FLORENCIO ABAD, THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE OF THE PHILIPPINES, THE WORLD BANK, THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, ROLANDO ANDAYA JR. AND THE FILIPINO PEOPLE

AN INVISIBLE CRIME

The Department of Education recently started delivering 19 million textbooks to 42,000 public schools nationwide under the National Textbook Delivery Program. To ensure that deliveries met all the right quantity and delivered address, it entrusted the help of civil society organizations to inspect books upon delivery. But has anyone bothered to check either's actually receipt or between the screens of these books? Has anybody seen the incredible mistakes and unbelievable shortcuts which these books pass off as "lessons" and "instructions"?

ASYA: NOON, NGAYON AT SA HINAHARAP, written by Emilinda Virue, Evelina Ulanza, Remedios Quiroz and Ruth Fuentes, published by SD PUBLICATIONS and printed in Thailand, is the most second year high school textbook for Social Studies approved by the Department of Education. It is described as a "commercial" edition. ASYA: HEOGRAPIYA, KASAYSAYAN AT KULTURA, published and printed in the Philippines by VIBAL PUBLISHING, caters to the private schools. After a thorough examination of this book, I discovered that it contains four hundred thirty-one (431) errors, and this despite the fact that it passed the evaluation and quality production standards of the DepEd not once but twice (2000 and 2004).

- **HAPPY STEPS®** – India's Unincorporated (listed magazine). Umbrella organization (company/organizing association). Whirling (pangpangsiyam ng kalayaan). Warbird (may kapa). Rice ball (bigas na bugo, bola). Bucket-weaving (nagkakalo ng bunot). Jeggeon (may ng Samara na tubig ng abyanyan ay hinahon ng ilang palanggi). Nine (may kwenta na gawa sa walumpu). Gobi Desert (mahabang disyerto). Samaritan (magandang-loob ng mga tao). Ramadan (nanggagal ni Mohammad ang pahiwag na Arabo).
- **Ahmet BILAM** – Negosyante ang Islam nang si Mohammad ay nagkatuon ng pangkalahatang mangangay sakit na pagkakatuon ng mga nagsasagawa bagaman mga sakit na kanya ng 11 taon. Mayaming kayanang Islam ang mga na ito kaharian ng Kwait ang mayaman. Mayaming Tipan, sa Berber at kay Isa Miguel. Pinanay ni Mohammad ang ngayon sa Rimbawan at Kristyanismo, ginawang Jerusalem ng angkinan ni Bhuza sa halip na Jerusalem at pinahintulutan ang pagkakatuon sa Kaaba na bagay kaba at sa tanda sa sakuniyang ng hanang mas na galing kay Mohammad. Ang mensaje ng mga Muslim ay kabilang manawang dalawampu at mamatay sa mga na ang kinamatay ng mga pinakabanag Kristyano.
- **JEWS** – Ang mga Hudyo ay pinapang-Semitikwalay dahil sa kanilang mahirang mitad ng pagpalay ng mga Aleman. Ang Torah na binubuo ng unang 5 aklat ng Lumang Tipan ay naglalaman ng mga kasulatan tungkol sa pag-ibig at pagpalang sa kabuhayan.
- **CHINA** – Umaabot ito ng 9 na araw ang Pistola Kumunista ng Tsina. Mahaba ang mga Tsino sa oras. Ang mga kabang Tsino ay pinagsasaad ng sapatos na bakal; mga pangaba ng mga Tsino ay nagsasaad ng mga kamay na nakatali sa likod. Ang Tsina ay nagsasaad ng Kristyanismo, Islam, pinakamalaking ng mga ang mga Tsino. Tinapay ang mga tawag sa kanilang kanang ng Tsina ang mayamang tao. Ang Gintong Aral ni Confucius ay nakasaad sa respektibong pinagpapagsap. Maraming nakikitang pagpala sa Lumang Aralaan ni Mao Tse-tung ang Tsina at gayunin ang mga pinakamaraming tao sa lahat ng komunismong lupa. Ang Great Wall of China ay 170 metro ang haba.

The Government Procurement Reform Law (R.A. 9184) foresees an anti-favoritism provision which requires "the return or return of substandard or defective goods bought by the government." How can the presence of 431 errors in a single textbook be legally and morally right? The anti-favoritism provision should be applied to textbooks that are substandard or defective. For possessing errors very much in excess of what is tolerable, SD Publications' ASYA is promoted and delivered by the government using loans from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (or from as many other public sources of textbooks) secured abroad on a lease whose extensive and exit into the heart, mind and soul of its user. Misdirection resulting from years of using error-riddled textbooks compromises the student's chance of a good life in the future by causing his potential for growth and development. The making of defective textbooks is an invisible crime which must be exposed and then stopped. This past advertisement is my contribution to the ongoing effort by all the good citizens of this country to help avert the storm of economic collapse which is nearly upon us. I will also donate to the DepEd the 53-page List of Errors I of SD Publications' ASYA I find in the basis of my evaluation and this ad.

ANTONIO CALIPIO GO
Ulirao
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NLEX may raise toll fees sans hearing, says solon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The Manila North Tollways Corp., which rehabilitated the more than 80-km North Luzon Expressway, can "arbitrarily" increase toll fee because its agreement with the government does not require public hearings, Bataan Rep. Antonio "Jon" Roman said.

"Under the TOA (Supplemental Toll Operations Agreement), the MNTC can raise toll fees without congressional approval, without Toll Regulatory Board approval or any public hearing whatsoever," Roman told the Inquirer.

He has filed Resolution 148, which is now in the House committee on rules seeking to remove this provision in the STOA and to scrap the first set of rate adjustments scheduled in December. The MNTC would be charging P2.00 per km for cars, P6.25 per km for buses and light trucks, and P7.47 per kmfor cargo trucks.

At P2.00 per km, solar owners would have to pay a toll fee of at least P100 to travel from Balintawak in Quezon City to Sta. Ines in Mabalacat, Pampanga.

Lawyer Romulo Quimbo Jr., chief of the MNTC legal department, disputed Roman's claim by citing Presidential Decrees 1113 and 1894 under which the MNTC obtained its original and amended franchise to operate the NLEX.

While the franchise allows automatic adjustments, it requires the MNTC to notify the government of new rates and to have them reviewed, Quimbo said. The approved rates are then published, road users can file petitions for rate reclassification before the TRB and public hearings are held.

Documents earlier furnished by the MNTC showed that the STOA went through 30 drafts between June 1999 and August 1999. The toll rates were stipulated in Clause 11 of the STOA agreed upon between the MNTC and the government in June 1999.

Under the STOA, toll rates are determined through the base toll rates and adjustment factors.

The base toll rates on a per entry basis were P35, P70 and P82 for cars, buses and trucks, respectively. On a per kilometer basis, the base toll rates were P0.82, P2.85 and P2.40 for cars, buses and trucks.

The adjustment factors—inflation rate and peso-dollar exchange rate—were destined to be the "among drivers" in determining the toll fees.

Under the STOA, the rate adjustments in the first 10 years are: 800-bps increase in excess during the first two years; 6 percent decrease after two years; 15 percent increase in the third up in the fifth months of increases, and 6 percent on the sixth increase.

Roman said her office was leading multisectoral efforts to bring down the annual increase to a "reasonable level." Juanita Avejera, PCB Central Luzon (Tech)

Bemedalled Scout Ranger dies in Aruba

FORMER Scout Ranger Monsanto Antonio Limuella Mangmeyang Jr. died on Sept. 4 after suffering cardiac arrest in Aruba, in the Caribbean. He was 56.

A scout ranger in the Armed Forces of the Philippines in the 1980s and 90s, Mangmeyang earned the Presidential Gold Cross Award for bravery for playing a pivotal role in the capture of one of the top leaders of the communist insurgency.

He is survived by his wife Cecilina Palome; children Michelle, Rhea, Rhe, Rutie and Nemar; grandchildren Gisele, Dan, Christa, Miguel and Mayumi; parents Antonio Sr. and Florida; and siblings Myrna Barion, Silgardo, Marina de Asuen, Jocelyn Garcia, Florin Villaseran, Marilyn Eugenio and Ms. Jovina Fernandez.

His body lies at the Dan Sison Chapel in Makati City. Interment will be on Sept. 23 at Ft. Bonifacio.

Supreme Court Doctrines

REMEDIAL LAW. CRIMINAL PROCEDURE/EVIDENCE—Burden of proof of the prosecution—"The prosecution is burdened to prove beyond reasonable doubt that (a) the crime charged was committed, and (b) the identity of the perpetrators of the said crime. In People vs. Estrada (260 SCRA 670 (1996)), the Supreme Court held that the first duty of the prosecution is not to present the crime but to prove the identity of the criminal. In normal the conviction of the accused, the identification of the accused as one of the assailants must be positive, categorical and consistent, made by a credible witness or witnesses. The identification of the accused as the perpetrator or one of the perpetrators of the crime charged is considerably not an easy task. [Citations omitted.] [Justice Callejo, Sr., Second Division, People vs Adlaon, G. R. No. 149179]

RV & D. Vitug

The Daily Gospel

Monday, September 20, 2004
25th Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Prv 3:27-34
Gospel: Lk 8:16-18

Jesus said to his disciples, "No one, after lighting a lamp covers it with a cloak or puts it under the bed, rather he puts it on a lampstand so that people coming in may see the light. In the same way, there is nothing hidden that shall not be uncovered, nothing kept secret that shall not be known and come to light. Take care how you hear; for whoever produces will be given more, but from those who do not produce, even what they seem to have will be taken away from them."

Commentary:

Matthew's gospel uses the image of a light on a lamp stand; but there's a subtle difference. It gives light to all who are in the house" (Mt 5:15), while here in Luke's gospel, it gives light to those who enter the house. Matthew was addressing writing for Christians of Jewish origin, but Luke was certainly writing for Gentile Christians. Gentiles are coming to the house of God's People (Jerusalem).

Read in connection with Ps. Ephesians 5:8-9: "Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light—for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true."

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Asean tackles illegal drugs spread

MANILA: Officials on drug matters of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) narcotics committee are meeting for the Philippines beginning today to discuss regional strategies against the proliferation of illegal drugs.

Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) Undersecretary and Executive Director Jose Cirilo Arlan said anti-drugs officials from Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Burma (Myanmar), Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam would be taking part in the four-day 20th Asean Senior Officials on Drug Matters (ASOD) conference as well as the Asean and China Cooperative Operations to Responsive to Dangerous Drugs (Aconard) meeting.

He said the DDB is hosting the affair at the Shangri-La Hotel in Makati City.

Worried

But Congress leaders are worried the affair could turn out bad for the Philippines because the DDB does not have a chairman following President Macapagal-Arroyo's failure to appoint someone to the post.

In a letter to the President dated Sept. 8, House oversight committee on dangerous drugs chair Nicanor Briones asked the ASOD and Aconard meetings slated to postpone for this because to appoint a new DDB chair after Interior Secretary Jose Lina Jr. resigned from the post early this year.

Some DDB members, who talked not to be named, said the failure of the President to appoint a new chair could subject the board to legal challenges, thereby jeopardizing the government's fight against illegal drugs.

Dangerous

"This is a dangerous situation. Sir, (the President) must not dilly-dally with time," a DDB member said.

The first ASOD meeting was held in 1976 and focused on the major Asean body to formulate recommendations in four major areas against illegal drugs, such as enforcement and legislation, treatment and rehabilitation, prevention and information, and training and research.

In a related development, 36 congressmen from the Visayas and Central Luzon wrote President Arroyo endorsing Cebu for the DDB's top post.

The legislators, in a letter dated Sept. 16, said Cebu's programs and policies at the DDB had heightened public awareness of the government's anti-drug policies.

The United States-based International Narcotics Enforcement Officers Association, meanwhile, announced it had bestowed its International Award of Honor on Cebu in recognition of his dedication to duty in the field of drug control, prevention and enforcement.

Tehani C. Flores

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Machine-readable passports to ease Pinoy travelers' woes

By TJ Burgonio

DFA wonder why your Philippine passport gets more than the usual scrutiny from immigration officers at airports abroad?

That's because passports issued in Manila are not machine-readable, hence, they are more exposed to having been tampered.

But don't lose hope. The Department of Foreign Affairs is pushing the implementation of its P1.013-billion machine-readable passport and visa (MRPV) project to start its initial stage of issuance in the first quarter of 2005.

"It wasn't for long before we join the ranks of machine-readable passport holders," Foreign Undersecretary Franklin Ebdalin said.

The machine-readable passports will incorporate biometrics and additional security features such as palm prints, a 2.5-line code and digital photos, among other things, officials said.

Biometrics, which entails the electronic scanning of users' fingers, in addition to the passport holder's photos, is currently being used by most countries. The US Embassy in Manila started issuing visas this month employing this latest technology.

"Whatever the technology the department decides to adopt, the machine-readable passport and visa will definitely comply with international civil aviation organization (ICAO) standards," Ebdalin said.

The current "machine-ready passport" contains no security features like a laser-perforated serial number, bar code and front-sealed laminate, but this haven stopped immigration officers at modern airports overhead from closely scrutinizing them.

If everything goes as scheduled, the re-groomed consular office at Ebdalin, the former US air base in Angeles, Pampanga, will start issuing machine-readable passports to applicants from central and northern Luzon – in which not yet.

In July 2005, all regional consular offices in the country are expected to be fully equipped to offer the new service.

But it won't be until January 2006 that the central facility, which will be instrumental on a growing property along Roxas Boulevard in Pasay City (across from the DFA office), will become fully operational to issue the passports to users.

The facility database will be linked to those of the National Statistics Office, the Bureau of Immigration and Deportation and other law enforcement agencies to ensure faster verification of the identities and records of the applicants, according to Diosdado San Pedro, MRPV program manager.

Once the project gets underway, machine-readable passports will be issued 24 hours after the submission of an application, a far cry from the regular six-day processing or process.

Filipinos working and residing abroad can start securing such passports from the nearest Philippine consulate in March 2006.

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Banks owe gov't ₱38B in back taxes

From page A1

would decide if the banks were liable,' BAP executive director Leonilo Coronel said in a text message to the Inquirer.

Based on the BIR's assessments, Aduru said that from 1998 to 2004, the banks should have paid the government some P21 billion in taxes (evenly split among domestic and foreign banks).

The 45 domestic banks owe part of the ₱10.5 billion in back taxes, according to the lawmaker. Plus penalties of ₱17 billion, the banks owe the government a total of ₱38 billion.

Bulacela has estimated that the BIR collect no less than ₱20 billion, minus the penalties, and allow the banks to pay their dues in staggered payments over two years.

He said a compromise deal should maximize the economic risk to the banking system and social protest and litigation that could deprive the government of badly-needed cash for its operations.

The BIR has set Dec. 31 as the deadline for its abatement program, which will waive the penalties.

Salceda said the collection of back taxes would have a marginal impact on P2[illegible] taxes, primarily borrowings of exporters, because they were already exempt from taxes as of last year.

He said the collection of the back taxes would highlight the BIR's improving collection efficiency, close proof of President Macapagal-Arroyo's call to close the loopholes in raising revenues, and implement the letter of the law.

"More importantly, the government wants the money," he said.

Salceda said the back taxes were a one-time gain and the government would still need to pass new tax measures to ensure recurring revenue collections.

Ala Arroyo is asking Congress to pass eight revenue measures that would raise P[illegible] a year.

The revenue measures are aimed at reducing the national government's budget deficit, which this year is expected to reach about P[illegible].

Clerical error

The lawmakers, who acknowledged last month that the country was in the middle of a fiscal crisis, said Thursday that the economy would be in "death throes" if new taxes unless new taxes were collected.

The BAP has questioned the basis for the BIR's tax assessment, claiming that it is based on an interpretation by the CTRP and that legislators had no intention of removing the tax exemption.

But in a letter to Senator Juvinal ng Filipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura on June 17, BIR commissioner Guillermo Parayno said "the deletion of certain words (exempt from all taxes') is a mere technical error that the legislature intended to change the meaning of the statute."

"Thus, the payment by PCIBS and UBSs of the 20 percent final income tax does not exempt them from the payment of the GRT, DST and other taxes," Parayno said.

GMA appeal

Salceda said that while the BAP had argued that Congress "inadvertently omitted or overlooked the tax exemption" of the PCIBS banks in enabling the CTRP, "the law is very clear and congressional records (showed) that it was the intent of Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile (then Senate wage and means committee chair) to withdraw the exemption."

Ms Arroyo said businessmen should help defray up the peso's value to 52 to the dollar by investing less abroad and expanding their businesses in the country.

In a speech before members of the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Inc. on Friday night, she said "invest in the Philippines rather than abroad to bring the peso-dollar value to 52."

The peso has continued to fall since it appreciated slightly after the May elections when Ms Arroyo defeated her top rival, movie actor Fernando Poe Jr., who campaigned on a platform of lowering the peso to above the 50-to-the-dollar mark.

Ms Arroyo is banking on private investors to make up the slack in investment spending up to next year because debt payments and subsidies have reduced government capital outlays to a minimum.

SALCEDA

Unrest scenario over new taxes may be alarmist

From page A1

The survey was conducted a month before 11 economists at the University of the Philippines School of Statistics published a paper warning that the country's fiscal crisis would lead to economic collapse in two years unless the widening fiscal deficit and ballooning public debt were immediately checked by revenue and cost-cutting measures.

The survey reflected the public mood of resistance to new and increased taxes before the UP paper was published. The paper set acutely read the general mood when it said that the public and the political elite did not seem to be aware that "our most urgent problem" — as emphasized by President Macapagal-Arroyo in her State of the Nation Address in July — was the "worsening" budget deficit and debt problem.

The purpose of the paper was to shock the nation into realizing that the "looming public threat" represented by an unsustainable public debt is behind the biggest economic challenge the country will have to confront immediately and for the remainder of this decade."

How the political class has addressed the problem does not indicate that the paper has achieved its intended shock effect. What has happened is that both the Arroyo administration and Congress—the institution in which resistance to new and increased taxes is historically deep-seated, have not only ruled out the taxes.

Worse, the administration and Congress have become so complacent and relaxed that they think they can just banish the issue away by dancing around it and "fiddling while Rome is aflame."

Opposition to tax

The Pulse Asia survey can be used by the popular representatives of the people lodged in Congress to reinforce their opposition to the tax measures on the ground that these reforms are unacceptable to the people.

The deficit and debt issue has been downplayed to sub-atomic size while the agenda of public debate has been orchestrated by both the administration and Congress. The issues are the (1) pork barrel, (2) reinstatement and "necessity" in the executive department, and (3) going back to the line item method of budgeting from the current lump sum appropriation.

These questions basically boil down to first, who check for most, and second, a tradeoff between keeping the pork barrel and passing new and higher taxes.

The reflexive of priority to these side issues is precisely what the UP paper had warned against. The paper anticipated the deflection of the problem to subsidiary issues. It warned: "The problem of the ballooning government debt, therefore, cannot then be attributed solely to the 'extravagance' of government budgets, or the inadequacy of its tax revenues."

The paper adds that "an equally important part of the story has been the dismal performance of government-run corporations and the equally disastrous policies of previous administrations that have affected them. Both have played a major role in deteriorating the size of the debt and the burden that taxpayers must bear to service it."

The question of the orderies of the so-called fiscal measures of government corporations has some up recently. In this area, the administration has not shown a tough will to cut down the extravagant subsidies to the

Television

The administration's rudest notice of "tax resistance" and "simple living" are nothing but reluctant to show the public it is cutting costs and to undercut criticism in Congress that the President is unwilling to share the pain of sacrifice while she calls upon members of Congress to endure, let alone give up, their pork barrel.

The UP paper anticipated the fallacious arguments that have been raised to address the deficit. It said:

"Let there be no mistake: there is every reason to look closely into the efficiency of public spending in order to eliminate waste and corruption. Raising the efficiency of government expenditure and investment implies that more results are achieved for the same or expenditure. But when the bulk of national government spending is already preempted by debt service, the internal revenue allotment to local governments, salaries of teachers, policemen and soldiers, not to mention maintenance and operations, it is difficult to find ways of reducing the allotment that are sufficient to meet the demands of sustainable debt service while providing large disbursements and averting social unrest."

What the paper is saying is that cost cutting to the bone has its social costs, in terms of public unrest. What it must be made is tax-then-cuts rather measures.

Confronting the "no to new taxes" argument, the paper said: "An attractive proposal is the often-repeated line that in fact no new taxes are needed, all that is required is sound administration and tax administration, get rid of corruption, and you get rid of the deficit problem."

Deception

"It is no surprise that this fallacy has spread and taken hold. It was the common theme propagated by both administration and opposition in the past electoral campaign, and both must now assume full responsibility for the deception they have framed on the public," the paper continued.

"The point of truth in this suggestion is that the efficiency of tax collection has indeed fallen off dramatically and is a major cause of the current budget deficits. It is also true that if the revenue effort were restored to 17–18 percent from the current 12 percent (of GDP), the current trajectory of unsolvable growth, inflation and depreciation might stand a chance of being sustained.

"The crucial consideration, however, is first, whether the time exists for such reforms in administration to play out before the crisis bomb explodes. It has taken all of five to six years for the revenue effort to reach its present dire levels. Can it possibly recover to a desired state? Most likely not."

The Pulse Asia survey presents to the Arroyo administration and Congress the challenge that they have to impress upon their constituencies that new taxes are structurally critical to raise revenues to narrow the deficit and avert the slide to economic collapse.

Some senators have warned of public unrest if new taxes are imposed. This vision of opposition is alarmist. It is nothing if political opposition is the "bonfire under" mounting the tension in the event of economic collapse.

PNP task force targets political armies in Abra

From page A1

then President Gerardo Espina on Sept. 16, 1997 on Mt. Buta in Sta. Peronina.

But he said Bulong's old militia was not about to disband was against the government. A September letter to Malacañang urged President Macapagal-Arroyo to isolate the rampaging generals to allow members of their faction to join the military.

Malacañang recognized members of CPLA faction led by James Armstrong and Mayor Khalled Bichara of Bucloc, Abra.

Assassins

Chief Supt. Rowland Albano, Cordillera police director, confirmed the private armies remain active after the January 2001 special report exposing the scene in Abra.

Albano confirmed the existence of PAZa but said the police needed to evaluate the groups' origins. "I hope that this 'Task force Abra' will not be given any political color and that there will be coordinated efforts from all sectors," he said.

Records of the Commission on Elections showed Abra had the highest incidence of political violence in the Cordillera.

"Six mean business and we are determined to restore peace and order in Abra," Albano said. "We hope to bring back the people's faith in the police."

In a statement, Albano said that the police had arrested 17 PAZ members since January. Among those arrested were six CPLA members, five security guards, three police and jail officers, and three barangay officials.

'Paleta ar'

Albano said he and Abra PNP chief, known as "Paleta ar," was offering rewards for any information leading to the identification of hired goons and the confiscation of their weapons.

He also said the campaign had as its initial 13 PAG members surrendered his idea politicians.

The police collected 150 loose firearms which had been either confiscated, recovered or surrendered.

But sources in the National Police Commission said the government had also placed top Cordillera police officials under surveillance.

One of the officials was unconcerned with an Abra warlord not was often seen at the policemen's home, the sources said. INQ8 reports from Frank Cimatu and Vincent Cabreza; PH Northern Luzon Bureau

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The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Quisco

Car bombings raise Iraq death toll to 300 in week

BAGHDAD, Iraq—As al-Qaida-linked group has threatened in a videotape to behead two Americans and a Briton within two days, and insurgents have carried out a new string of car bombings, killing at least 20 Iraqis and two American soldiers.

The accelerating violence has taken 300 lives in the past week.

The videotape which surfaced Saturday was the first sound on the fate of Americans Jack Hensley and Eugene Armstrong and Briton Kenneth Bigley since the three construction contractors were kidnapped from their Baghdad home seven days earlier.

All three sat on the floor, blindfolded, slightly bowed but apparently unharmed.

"My job consists of installing and furnishing camps in Taji base," each man said in turn after identifying himself, as one point, a soldier's rifle pointed down at the head of the man who identified himself as Hensley.

The Tawhid and Jihad group, led by Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, claimed responsibility for the abductions and demanded the release of Iraqi women detained in two American prisons here.

The videotape was broadcast by Al Jazeera shortly before it received a fresh kidnapping claim. Another group said it had ordered 30 workers for an American-Turkish company and threatened to kill them in three days if their firm didn't leave Iraq.

Kidnappings and spectacular bombings have become the signature weapons of insurgents waging a 17-month campaign against US and Iraqi forces, a campaign that has persisted since the interim government of Prime Minister Ayad Allawi took power in June.

Nevertheless, Allawi initiated US and Iraqi forces were retaking the fight and said progress would be made to calm the violence before crucial elections can be January.

The insurgency is "not getting stronger; it's getting more desperate. We are squeezing out the insurgency," Allawi said in an interview to be aired Sunday on ABC's "This Week."

"We are winning. We will continue to win. And we are going to prevail," he said.

Guerrillas have struck with increasing sophistication in Baghdad, the center of Allawi's power. It, and have dealt punishing blows against Iraq's security forces—the lynchpin of the US strategy for restoring security.

In the northern city of Erbil, a car sped an armored vehicle for security, lined up at the offices of the Iraqi National Guard on Saturday. Gunshots opened fire on the vehicle and it exploded, leaving the street strewn with bloodied bodies, twisted metal and shards of glass.

At least 19 people were killed and 67 wounded, the Health Ministry said.

It was the third bombing this week targeting the beleaguered security forces, seen as collaborators with the United States and its allies. AP

Investors hit by insecurity count losses

DUBAI—Rampant violence and an escalating hostage crisis in Iraq are putting a strain on Gulf investors who, having banked on a floundering post-Saddam Hussein neighbor are now bravely counting their losses.

The near-daily car bombings, assassination attempts and kidnappings are crippling foreign companies, a number of which have been forced to halt operations in Iraq.

Financiers who have pumped millions into establishing businesses there barely 17 months ago are already disappointed with the impact on their balance sheets but are biding their time, hoping security will somehow improve.

"Since last April, the market and business sentiment somewhat," said a Dubai-based businessman, who feels that 11 months after the April 2003 fall of Saddam's regime instead in course of $7 million in opening businesses in Iraq.

"From April to the first week of September, we have incurred losses of potential income of almost $3 million," he told AFP requesting anonymity.

He has two four-star hotels in Iraq, a gas station business, laundry services, a trading company as well as food-catering and manpower supply services.

"All investments was made after the war last year and until this year," he said. But since April, when four US contractors were killed by Iraqi mobs in the Sunni-populated Muslim town of Fallujah, the business climate has deteriorated to the point that the market is "way behind" the first two months of 2004.

"People in general don't buy unless they need something badly. The Iraqi government is not buying. They issue tenders, you submit bills and there's no decision or they change. It seems they don't have a budget yet," he said.

One consequence is that he has had to lay off 50 percent of his manpower, all Iraqi, thereby affecting the flow of money back into an already depressed economy.

One of his hotels, located on the banks of the Tigris river, was completed in April. "We've locked it, with all the imported furniture still inside," he said. Five months later it is still barricaded.

His second hotel went from almost 100 percent to 5 percent occupancy, said the businessman, who has two companies in Dubai and 10 staffing, including subsidiaries.

As the outset of his foray to the Iraqi market, he projected pay-back was on average two years.

"What even happened on some projects other are started way that the pay-back was nine months or a year. It was excellent." But the worsening situation since April put a stop to that and he can no longer speculate when he will get a good return on his investment.

The first business requirement for a successful economy in Iraq would obviously be improved security, he said. The next would be changing the country's commercial laws and strengthening its banking system to better serve potential investors.

A spokesperson for the Dubai-based Iraqi Business Council, set up earlier this year to promote joint ventures in Iraq, and grouping Iraqi businessmen and companies in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), said the unrest has affected businesses throughout the region that are dealing with Iraq. AFP

UN tells Sudan: Stop killing spree

UNITED NATIONS—A divided UN Security Council approved a resolution threatening oil sanctions against Sudan unless the government reins in its militias blamed for a killing spree in Darfur and ordered an investigation of whether the attacks constitute genocide.

The vote Saturday was 11-0 with four abstentions—China, Russia, Pakistan and Algeria.

China, a permanent council member with veto power, said immediately after the vote that it would veto any future resolution that sought to impose sanctions on Sudan.

"I told the Sudanese government that the possibility of any government-to-government sanctions is a little slim," said China's UN Ambassador Wang Guangya. "We always believe that sanctions is not a helpful means to achieve political objectives. It will only make matters worse."

The resolution adopted Saturday says the council would "consider further action" to consider sanctions against Sudan's petroleum sector or other punitive measures if the government doesn't act quickly to stop the violence and bring the perpetrators to justice—or if it doesn't cooperate with an African Union monitoring force.

The resolution strongly endorses the deployment of a beefed-up African Union force with an expanded monitoring mission that would actively try to prevent attacks and mediate to stop the conflict from escalating. More than 50,000 people have already died and over 1.2 million have fled their homes to escape the violence.

It also authorizes Secretary General Kofi Annan, who was in the council chamber for the vote, to rapidly appoint an international commission to investigate reports of human rights violations in Darfur and determine "whether or not acts of genocide have occurred."

Last week, US President George W. Bush's administration for the first time called the attacks "genocide," a crime punishable under a 1948 UN convention.

Sudan's UN Ambassador Elfatih Erwa said the government would implement the "unfair" resolution despite "the injustices it contains." He accused the United States of introducing a safety to achieve "the political objectives" of President George W. Bush's administration and Congress—a charge immediately rejected by US Ambassador John Danforth. AP

N. Ireland talks fail to secure agreement

LEEDS CASTLE, England—High-pressure talks among rival Northern Ireland parties have ended with no agreement to revive a Catholic-Protestant administration, but British Prime Minister Tony Blair insisted that a deal "historic in its meaning" may yet be achieved.

Blair and Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern—who oversaw Northern Ireland's Good Friday accord of 1998 and have spent two years striving to restore the central goal of power sharing—stood side by side Saturday as delegations filtered out of the Leeds Castle meeting place. They looked tired, but tried to sound upbeat.

Blair said negotiators had "not yet achieved a comprehensive agreement" but insisted that hours' worth of talks over words would keep pressing. "There is huge potential in what has happened here," he said.

"We believe that what it starts on offer is reasonable in its substance and historic in its meaning," Blair said at the end of three days of talks at Britain's medieval Leeds Castle.

Both leaders said they had hoped to broker an agreement between Ian Paisley, the hardline pro-Union Democratic Unionist Party and the Democratic Unionists, who represent most of the province's British Protestant majority. But for the third time in two years, a negotiating marathon led by the two premiers failed to break the deadlock.

Blair said Ian Paisley has not yet provided a formal statement from the IRA, spelling out its positions. But he said he expected the underground group to announce its intentions soon. AP

Russia's security agency foils new terror attack in Moscow

MOSCOW—Russian law enforcement agencies have foiled a terror attack in Moscow, the FSB security agency said Saturday, two weeks after a series of attacks killed more than 400 people within days in the country.

No part of explosive mixtures in Moscow and Russia, police and the FSB have found and defused explosive devices in cars in Moscow," FSB spokesman Sergei Ignatchenko was quoted as saying by the Interfax news agency.

The explosives and mines were discovered in a car after police stopped it late Friday and became suspicious of the driver, who appeared to be under the influence of narcotics, he said.

Under questioning, the man confessed that he was promised $5,000 to drive and park that and another car near Saturday Prospekt, a major thoroughfare in Moscow that many government officials use to get to their residences, he said.

FSB agents defused the explosives in one of the vehicles overnight, as residents from neighboring houses were evacuated to a nearby school, NTV reported.

"We were sleeping and got a call around 1 a.m., I think," a woman told NTV. "They said there was the threat of a blast ... we quickly left."

The detained driver later died in hospital of a heart attack, unnamed police officials told Russian news agencies.

It was not immediately clear whether these were explosives in both of the cars about which the state told police—some news reports said the second car did not have explosives, while others said it had explosives but no detonators.

The incident came a fortnight after a week that saw four major terror acts on Russian soil, including a deadly school hostage taking in the southern town of Beslan that killed nearly 340 people, half of them children.

The school was seized a day after a woman suicide bomber blew herself up outside a metro station in Moscow, killing 10 people, and a week after the downing of two planes, which left 90 dead.

Responsibility for all of the violence was Friday claimed by separatist Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev, according to a rebel website. AFP

Bush-Kerry debates seen as pivotal to poll outcome

WASHINGTON—Because Sen. John Kerry is the challenger and top President George W. Bush in most national polls, he seems to have the most to gain from a strong performance in the upcoming fall debates. Some Democrats see the face-offs as the last chance for a Kerry breakout.

But presidential debates present pitfalls as well as opportunities.

Unscripted moments and gaffes can backfire on incumbents and challengers alike: Al Gore's heavy sighs in 2000, President George H.W. Bush's checking of his watch in 1992, Michael Dukakis' passionless answer to a question about the hypothetical rape and murder of his wife in 1988, President Gerald Ford's 1976 declaration of Poland from Soviet domination in 1976.

Barring any major developments in Iraq or on the terrorism or economic fronts, the debates could be even more important than usual this year because of their potential impact on remaining voters who still waver thereabouts or undecided and because of the closeness of the race.

In a poll by the Pew Research Center, 29 percent of those surveyed said the debates would matter in deciding how they would vote on Nov. 2. Some 66 percent said their minds were already made up.

Those undecided voters could make a huge difference, according to a Nielsen survey that 46 million people watched the first debate between Bush and Gore in 2000. The second and third debates drew audiences of 37.6 million and 37.7 million, respectively.

This year's debates "to reality are more important than the vice-conventions," said Democratic pollster Stan Greenberg.

"You could see go through the 2000 election without understanding that the debates matter. Al Gore went from a five-point lead prior to the debates to being five points behind after the debates," Greenberg said.

The candidates' differences are already pronounced this year than usual on major issues that divide the country: Iraq, job losses, rising health care costs and the simple-sounding federal deficit.

"It will be one of the few times when George Bush will have to defend his record," said Kerry adviser Joe Lockhart, a former press secretary to President Bill Clinton. "He's governed very deft or slipping and sliding when it comes to the next record."

But University of Virginia political scientist Larry Sabato suggests that Bush will have one big advantage in that "he's constantly underestimated. This is where the intense dislike for Bush among Democrats backfires on them. They believe that he's dumb as a post, and when he demonstrates he's not, he wins."

Organizers were continuing into the weekend between the Bush and Kerry camps over venue of the debates. The first one recommended by the bipartisan Commission on Presidential Debates is set for Sept. 30 at the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Florida.

The panel has recommended two additional presidential debates—Oct. 8 in St. Louis and Oct. 13 in Tempe, Arizona—and set Oct. 5 vice presidential debate in Cleveland.

The Kerry campaign has agreed to all four, the Bush campaign has been noncommittal. Presidents Bill Clinton in 1996 agreed to only two debates in his race against Republican Bob Dole, and many expect Bush to follow the same route. AP

Blair was warned of chaos after Saddam, says paper

LONDON—The government was accused Saturday of "clearly misleading" the British public over plans for postwar Iraq after a newspaper reported that Prime Minister Tony Blair was warned a year before the invasion that postwar stability would be difficult.

Blair responded that the allies had had a plan for postwar Iraq, but it had been frustrated by insurgents in Iraq.

Citing government documents marked "secret and personal," The Telegraph newspaper said that Blair's chief policy adviser Sir David Manning warned Blair that US President George W. Bush had no answers to big questions, such as "what happens on the morning after."

The documents show Foreign Secretary Jack Straw had written to Blair a year before the conflict saying large numbers of troops would have to be stationed for many years if order was to be maintained after the ousting of Saddam Hussein, the newspaper reported.

He wrote that nobody seemed to know what would happen after a war had been won, writing, "There seems to be a huge hole in this thus-anything," the Telegraph said.

Blair responded to the report Saturday while taking a break from Northern Ireland talks in Leeds castle, southeast of London.

"Having read in the papers that apparently I was warned of the chaos that was going to ensue in Iraq, I actually got the minute each saw me. It didn't do anything of the sort," Blair said.

"What it warned of was this: it's very important that we don't replace one dictator, Saddam Hussein, with another."

That is why, he said, the United States and Britain had sought United Nations "blessing" for elections "to guide Iraq to democracy."

"The idea that we did not have a plan for afterward is simply not so," he said. "We did, and we have published that plan, 'we there are people in Iraq who are determined to stop it.'"

Blair said Iraq was "the very seedbed of the fight against terrorism, against groups that are prepared to kill, to take hostages, to do whatever they can in order to prevent Iraq becoming stable, democratic country."

The Daily Telegraph said the documents showed Blair had signed up to the US policy of regime change in March 2002, a year before the conflict started.

"This underlines very candidly not only the reservations that existed in the Foreign Office about our ability to handle post-conflict Iraq, but also the lack of a comprehensive plan for the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq, which we consistently called for before the war," said Michael Ancram, shadow foreign secretary for the opposition Conservative Party. AP

UN watchdog tells Iran to stop enriching uranium

VIENNA—The UN atomic agency called on Iran to "immediately" suspend all activities related to the enrichment of uranium as it also set a Nov. 25 deadline for a full review of Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program.

Iran reacted to the resolution Saturday by the UN watchdog International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) by saying it would cooperate but warned it may defy the agency's call to suspend uranium enrichment, the process for making fuel for nuclear reactors but also the explosive material for atomic bombs.

"The key thing is that Iran is now confronted with an ultimatum," nonproliferation expert Gary Samore told AFP in a telephone interview.

The compromise resolution worked out by the hardline United States and Europe's more conciliatory three main states, Britain, France and Germany, was "a victory for both American and European diplomacy," said Samore, a senior fellow at London's International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS).

Britain, France and Germany had submitted the resolution, strongly opposed by non-aligned countries which fear imposing a deadline on Iran to suspend uranium enrichment could set a precedent for depriving developing nations of peaceful nuclear technology.

"The resolution was adopted by consensus, without a vote," International Atomic Energy Agency spokesperson Melissa Fleming told reporters at a meeting of the IAEA's 35-nation board of governors, as the board voted not to consider the non-aligned movement's amendments to the text.

The United States claims Iran is secretly developing nuclear weapons and has been lobbying strongly for decisive action against the Islamic Republic.

Washington had pressed for an Oct. 31 ultimatum for Tehran to fully suspend uranium enrichment and report on its other activities to the IAEA, and for Iran to be automatically referred to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions if it failed to do so.

But in a compromise, the United States and the so-called Euro 3 set a Nov. 25 deadline for a full review of Iran's nuclear program and called on Tehran to "immediately" suspend all uranium enrichment activities, with this also being reviewed in November. **AFP**

Jiang expected to relinquish last official post

BEIJING—China's aging former paramount ruler Jiang Zemin is expected to give up his last official post when a high-level meeting of the ruling Communist Party ends later Sunday.

Jiang's predicted handover of the military to his successor Hu Jintao would complete the party's first bloodless transfer of power since the People's Republic was established in 1949.

The 198-member Communist Party Central Committee is expected to approve Jiang's resignation as chairman of the powerful Central Military Commission by the close of its secretive four-day meeting, party and diplomatic sources said.

The sources said there was much pressure within the central committee for the 78-year-old military chief to retire, following in the footsteps of late paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, who resigned as chairman of the military commission in 1989 in favor of Jiang.

According to communist party tradition a communique is expected to be issued later Sunday announcing any personnel changes.

Security at the venue, the party-run Jingxi Hotel in west Beijing, remained tight Sunday with police keeping traffic moving and shooing bystanders away.

At midday more than a dozen black sedans exited the hotel, with many heading in the direction of the party's Zhongnanhai headquarters in the center of the capital. Some two dozen large buses remained in the hotel parking lot, signaling that the conclave was still in session.

In Hong Kong, the South China Morning Post newspaper Saturday suggested Jiang could still wield influence even if he does resign his final post. It cited the example of Deng, who gave up all his official posts in 1989 but continued to hold power with no title for years.

"Mr. Jiang's retirement is unlikely to produce any major changes in domestic or foreign policies," it said. "But as Mr. Hu continues to consolidate his power and make his mark, subtle changes can be expected." **AFP**

South Africa's poor to get bank accounts

JOHANNESBURG—South Africa's major banks are reaching out to the 13 million poor who have no bank accounts, offering them a "Mzansi" seen as vital to advance black economic empowerment.

"Mzansi" account holders will enjoy low fees and no-fuss applications with banks that have been known to demand a myriad of documents including salary slips and proof of residency to do business.

"All you will need is an identity document and a very, very small deposit, around 20 rand," (US$3/2.50 euros), says Charles Chemel who is spearheading the project for the South African Banking Council, a watchdog group.

While South Africa boasts one of the most sophisticated banking sectors in the world, it is also saddled with the baggage of apartheid as former homelands set up for blacks have few banking outlets.

Giving poor South Africans access to a "Mzansi"—a Zulu word meaning south—fits into the objectives of President Thabo Mbeki's key policy of black economic empowerment that seeks to transfer some of the white-owned wealth into the hands of black South Africans.

A black economic empowerment charter for the banking sector that came into effect in January calls on banks to broaden access to financial services to blacks who were dispossessed under apartheid.

A study by the Reserve Bank last year showed that 72 percent of black South Africans do not own bank accounts compared to nearly 90 percent of whites who do.

Most of the "unbanked" were unemployed and those who did have a job lived in shacks or squatter camps in rural areas. Pensioners and students also formed a large chunk of South Africans without bank accounts.

Affordability was the main reason for staying away from banks that charge average service fees of around 40 rand ($5) per month, the study found. **AFP**

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OPINION

Publisher ... Editor in Chief ... Managing Editor ... Associate Editors ... Opinion Editor for Readership ... Deputy Opinion Editor ... Opinion Editor ... City Editor ... Editorial Consultant ... Art & Design Director ... Board of Business Advisers ... President ... Senior Vice President for Sales and Marketing ... Senior Vice President for Corporate Services ... VP for Advertising ... VP for Circulation ...

Pay cuts

EDITORIAL

We support the President's directive to all heads of government-owned and -controlled corporations to cut their pay. Some GOCC executives, President Macapagal-Arroyo said last Friday, had in fact already agreed to take "voluntary pay cuts while reorienting their respective organizations to the imperatives of discipline and effectiveness."

We shall see. This is not the first time that the issue of excessive pay has hit the headlines. In June 2001, Ms Arroyo issued Executive Order 20, setting a cap of P308,000 a month on the salaries of GOCC executives. But the overall list of the 140 best-paid executives in government service, topped by the P9-million salaries of the chair of the Philippine National Oil Company and the chair of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, covers the years 2002 and 2003. In other words, after EO 20 took effect.

Inevitably, the ghost of political will raises its heavy head again. If the President failed to implement her own order at a time when her mandate consisted mainly of the reformist Edsa II agenda, what makes her think she will succeed this time?

Her own reading of her new post-election mandate runs against the principles of self-sacrifice she now issues. From her analyses of her victory, to her appointments to the Cabinet and other sensitive posts, to the arm-chasing arrangements in both chambers of Congress that she encouraged among her allies, the President has been nothing but political. She has recognized her many debts of gratitude, and is actively finding ways, sometimes very creative ways, to pay them.

These actions contrast markedly with the new, post-election declarative rhetoric of shared pain, of graduated sacrifice.

Does this mean the new cut-your-pay-or-else-you're-fired directive issued last Friday is doomed to fail? Not necessarily.

The use of the word "crisis" is a milestone; the President will be loath to turn back, after willing herself to get to the point where she could use the c-word. And the decision to make the eight new tax measures the centerpiece of her legislative agenda is a line left in the sand; she has risked political convenience by taking the road less taken.

Reducing the straight-shooting budget secretary with the responsibilities of the now-defunct Presidential Committee on Effective Governance is also a fleeting of political will. Secretary Emilia Boncodin is now tasked to go over the controversial sector, "GOCC to GOCC," to make sure that they comply with the pay cuts. "I told [Boncodin], if they defy my authority, then they are disobeying, which could be a ground for removal," the President said. To bolster the obvious, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye issued a statement which read, in part: "This campaign will be based on a compliance scorecard on pay cuts and austerity measures among the GOCCs. This will be a tool for deciding who among the presidential appointees would stay or leave."

We cannot imagine that the shocking of the compliance scorecard will take too long. If we parse the President's own management-speak, we find that lack of discipline and effectiveness—in other words, lack of performance—is something she already assumes. Will we have to wait another year before we see well-paid heads roll?

We think that Boncodin and the President already know which GOCC fat cats have been napping on the job. Many of them have used their raise lives in the first three years of the Arroyo administration. It is time to be rid of them.

Let's begin with a simple test. Which of the GOCC heads already in office between 2001 and 2003 followed EO 20? As far as we can tell, only Edi administrator Corazon de la Paz cut her pay to fit the guidelines (contrary to the careless grandstanding of a sidelined Cebu politician, Sen. Sergio Osmeña III, who accused De la Paz of doing the opposite). What does that make of the rest? Sergio Apostol and Honeygirl de Leon are no longer with the PNOC or the PCSO. But the union of a Cebu political heavy, Winston Garcia, is still chair of the Government Service Insurance System. Last week, he decided to cut his pay to P140,808—a classic case of doing too little, too late.

What would Boncodin make of him? The answer to this and another questions will determine whether the President's new campaign will meet the fate of the old.

A begging republic; a beggar-President

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THE ILLUSION ("strong republic" has become a begging republic. And the President, who is no longer the leader of a nation but rather the "most powerful" beggar in the world, has become a beggar-President.

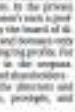
The government itself prohibits begging—huge billboards warn the poor and fund-generators alike against the giving of alms to beggars. But it has resorted to begging to raise funds from a looming financial disaster. After "reserving" P1 million apiece from a group of mostly Filipino-Chinese businessmen trapped in a jetliner after the so-called Boracillo Putsch, the government is now begging each of the 58,000 rig taxpayers to pay P1 million more. For being such good taxpayers, the Presidents will publish them by thanking them for another P1 million apiece, while the tax evaders remain in their hiding.

Wouldn't it be better to tell them to pay the correct taxes instead of begging for contributions? According to estimates, there is about P200 billion in uncollected taxes lying over there.

The Inquirer editorial wrote last tuesday...to be used to pay future taxes—in exchange for their contributions. In-their study would be no increase in the government's tax income. And we have had such a sorry experience with tax-for-equity schemes.

The President is also begging members of Congress to agree to a cut in their pork barrel, and the lie cuts in government-owned and controlled corporations in violation by the their executive salaries. Why does she have to beg them when all she has to do is to refuse to sign appropriations for pork from her proposed budget? If she is really the "powerful President" that the Americans think she is, she should not be afraid of the members of Congress. If there is no pork appropriation in her budget, there is no pork and no Congress member can override the proposed budget she submits; it can only decrease it.

But the truth is she has submitted a P1[illegible]



Conrado de Quiros

Never again

THERE'S THE RUB

I'd glad that there seems to be renewed interest in what happened 32 years ago. Several networks called me up asking to interview us for something they were doing on martial law, the 32nd anniversary this coming September.

I worry, however, about a question I've heard a couple of times, which apparently many people, journalist's the generation that went through martial law, are asking today, namely, what we would have done if Ferdinand Marcos were to have both heads and bridges, they say, which has not happened to any comparable country since, and prime ways into Europe throughout the 1970s, if not the early 1980s, which has happened even less often. And then, weight worry a long way toward putting blood on the table.

Well, you can't blame people entirely for thinking this way. There are hard times, and hard times are always an invitation to looking at the world with rose-colored glasses. But it's also a most dangerous way of doing so, the sure way being to pine for even those bits which is presumed to accomplish things democracy cannot. The latest I have heard inordinately times (1930s), people wondering...one issues I've had from the cradle of is sure we're on agreement—if authoritarian governments, were a Lee Kuan Yew rather than a Ferdinand Marcos at the helm, wars not the cure to our plight.

Nothing is more delusional. True enough, parts were made throughout the 1970s. The price of rice, sugar and beer did not soar much from one another, for not as sure now how much a can of beer were then. I do know it didn't go up by much before the 1980s. As well as most goods. But there was a time boom-city ing underfoot then.

The little bomb was the debt thrown in-current throughout this time. The early part of the 1970s was the period when the Western banks pounced with petrodollars, which were the dispersion the oil producing countries were dumping on them. The banks in turn dumped the petrodollars on the Third World countries—many of which were ruled by cyclones, enemies of America's support for them—which

guaranteed that the loans would be paid whatever happened to them or their countries. To this day, we continue to reel from that guarantee in the form of "economic appropriation," the sum automatically deducted from our national budget—even if the poor have no food nor their children milk—to pay for our debts.

The roads and bridges Marcos built may look impressive when you compare them to those you see by his successors, but they are pathetic when you compare them to the infrastructure he had and to the infrastructure put up by the other Southeast Asian countries that built ours loans. I get depressed every time I leave the country and am greeted by the stark contrast between the Pasay Square International Airport and the airports of other Southeast Asian countries. Contemporaries of Marcos's late Marcos is the second most corrupt ruler in the world), time only to Suharto, he stole some $35 billion...compared to Suharto's $35 billion—which we are paying for to this day. And though Suharto was the bigger crook, he was at least the more patriotic one. Unlike Marcos, he did not stash his loot outside but plunked it in various businesses in Indonesia. Thus it is inconsistent difference.

The point is simple: it is simply not true that Marcos supplied bread in lieu of freedom. He supplied neither. The seeming economic stability of the 1970s was just that, seeming. It was a surface placidity that rested on roiling waters. Of for those who did not like metaphors, it was a temporarily stability brought on the price of a great catastrophe in the future. The future came in the early 1980s when the banks began to collect and creditors like Drexel Dev. Inc. still with their sure loan to pleasure captains of the world.

Someone asked me why we continue to blame Marcos for our woes today. My answer is: Why the hell shouldn't we? Of course, subsequent leaders have made a mess of things, but why shouldn't we blame the leader who made the worst mess of all? Marcos' tyranny set deep and continues to ravage the country to this day. It's my same answer to the question why we continue to blame colonialism for our woes. Of course, we've learned to set our minds, too, but why shouldn't we blame those who screwed them up most of all? Colonial tyranny ran even deeper and continues to ravage our thinking to that day such as President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Some of this includes the horrors martial law wreaked on the nation—the loss of freedom was the most potent. What Marcos did to Juan Tamborlan, his father's latest enemy, decades earlier...which was to kill him with a sniper's bullet which he himself his wife's assassination in Philippine democracy decades after—which was to waylay it with democratic ship while it shuddered. The deaths are too plentiful to mention, those of clients buried in the sea every shallow graves of national forgetfulness. Ignoring the horrors that were the proofs, many of them the lives and brightest in the country.

Someone asked me if Marcos did not at least replace freedom with discipline during martial law. Well, I had been all those days on TV that said, "He dismantled oligarchy, displaced any Anthropo I'm achieve progress, a nation has to have discipline." And in later years, we had Anyang Aquino so much the public by negative example to show the ways of profligacy. We profess through words that Marcos wasted only the public, and not himself and his cronies, as putative discipline and austerity. The lines reach, of course, is complete. Among Marcos are no more words frugality or reform than Sipping Pe-ron or Imelda Romualdez Marcos.

But it is tempted to say "Never again" to all these things. For some, if not all, of them are happening even as we speak. And few are saying their voices to stop it.

Palace in 'romantic' mood these days

BY RECENT events, the nation has become accustomed with the Arroyo administration's penchant for the romantic. Chicken was mouth wrens like "budget deficit," "debt cap" and "fiscal crisis," believing that talking about the problems will help dispel the dire implications of the problems. Cecilia Alvarez used to tell Rodjun Serenade Ebdane to use ALDEF phrases. I'm glad she was able to accommodate to Despite her heroic schedule confining in Congress.

Colonel Rosendo Almar the one-coming movies before lightening in Malacañang, such as running off the air-conditioning system in certain hours. "Mabuti talaga," she advised, adding that the dimming of the lights was to save energy. Arroyo's heart appeared a common joke there: "sana romantic mood iyo agpiro." She also related with straight face during a meeting with DOST officials, the President mentioned the stirring of a "romantic relationship" which turned out to be science and a piece of drunken in plastic plants and snowfalls. The Department of Budget and Management chief assured that such small measures, necessary as the proposition that they may not mean much, will save P3 billion to P5 billion.

Secretary Bonoan also stressed that in casting we have a "fiscal crisis," GMA might have been motivated to take it to heart. "Epidemic digital" about the need to be cautious with school finances. While using fiscal crisis, but if we don't watch out, we will have a real one soon, she explained. So what's the problem? Bonoan explained that

Providing women with more options

IN CONNECTION with Dr. Sylvia Estrada-Claudio's letter, "Secretary Duque misadvises virtue," (PDI, 8/7/04) may I make the following clarifications:

First of all, it has never been my job or the job of the Department of Health to buy contraceptives. All contraceptive supplies, distributed free of charge through the government's health care system in the past, were donated to the Philippines by foreign governments or organizations. After many years of this, many Filipino have come to equate the government's role in maternal and child health and responsible parenthood with the available approaches employed in only one of the many essential elements of maternal and child health and responsible parenthood. It does not spell out the totality of the DOH's work in this area.

Admittedly, the focus of the Commission on Population in the 1970s was the promotion and distribution of contraceptives. However, PopCom has since evolved into a more enlightened agency that addresses a myriad other population issues within its mandate, such as migration, human development, population and environment, human settlements, etc., even as it continues to acknowledge the importance of contraceptive distribution. Rather than work in a small key, the present day PopCom now works as a coordinative agency within a broad matrix of capabilities and services available in various government agencies and units.

Statistics will show that the prevalence of contraceptive use has leveled off, and there is really no massive unmet among the Filipino people to have more and more free contraceptives. The observations that homosexual proponents were used for gardening, and that stocks of unwanted contraceptives just took up space in warehouses, are not just urban legends, but facts. Thus, financial resources, allocated by foreign donors to assist the government's programs, could actually be better spent to either promote dual purchasing consciousness.

He should also frequently use percentages about the role of contraceptives in women's health, women's rights and healthy families. To equate access to contraceptives with the realization in women's full morbidity and mortality is simplistic. Equally flawed is the crude, politicized assertions that without any accented the rights they deserve when they are unable to use contraceptives.

The majority of women who use these products are not wholly aware of the many effects they have on their health and lives, and of the other approaches that are available to them. Our government is now loosely on providing truck ban so that options available in the past, it will also ensure adequate and honest information on the various modalities or approaches families can choose to ensure their health and well-being.

It is our belief that women's rights, reproductive rights, and also right to health can only be realized within an environment of informed choice.

—RAMON M. BAUTE, M.D.
Secretary
Department of Health
San Lazaro Compound,
Rizal Avenue, Sta. Cruz, Manila

LETTERS

'Good roads' need maintenance, repair

IN CONNECTION with the letter, "Repairing good roads," (PDI, 8/5/04) based on a report from our National Capital Region office, we would like to inform the public that the road repair works are being undertaken under the preventive maintenance program for year 2005. Most of the road projects including Kamputan Avenue, especially on the Northbound lane (going to Cubao area), have already started and near minor works.

Repair works on specific portions are marked on a Friday night and are targeted for completion within the next two days so as to make the roads passable on the following Monday.

—JENNIFER B. PINGUAN,
officer-in-charge,
Public Information Division,
Department of Public Works and Highways, Manila

Deplorable condition of SUCs

PEOPLE are share your deep deliverance for unrequited, the reason by which you continue the literal crisis is one-sided. ("Climb, climb," PDI editorial, 8/28/04) The government's adherence to globalization (i.e. tariff reduction, huge tax incentives for foreign investors) and bias for big business largely contributes to the fiscal crisis.

We do not question the reports on the use of the Priority Development Assistance Fund. However, it is wrong to imply that the PDAF cannot be used for projects beneficial to the people.

While the editorial singled out Bayan Muna's project in the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, it did not bother to see how the students never will benefit the students. We believe the school's all's rationale is rooted in the system's lack of knowledge on the deplorable condition of the SUC and other state universities and colleges (SUCs).

The SUC badly needs overhauling. To illustrate, the sixth floor of the main building in Sta. Mesa gets flooded during the rainy season. The students can no longer use the toilet on the roof. Class sizes range from 60 to 80 students, having them to occupy the corridors during class hours. Some classrooms do not have lighting or ventilation. An inventory of the dilapidated facilities would be a long list.

The PUP which has 140 teachers and 16,000 students, suffers from a meager subsidy. The Department of Budget and Management has proposed to allot P9.45-M subsidy for the PUP next year, an amount P2.5 million less than its budget this year.

Because of low subsidy, school charges have been increased by 67 percent to 140 percent. New fees have been imposed for such matters as drafting fees, verification of grades per subject, examination fee, change of subject/class hour/schedule. The majority of the PUP students are children of ordinary workers and farmers who find it difficult to pay even just the P12 per unit tuition fee.

The situation in other SUCs is no better. for 2005, the proposed budget for SUCs is only P36.85 billion. The 2004 has proposed to give the Department of Education P111.04 billion. The total of these two allocations accounts for a measly 12.98 percent of the national budget for 2005. Ironically, the state's poorest universities will suffer the biggest budget cut. The University of the Philippines System's budget will be slashed by almost P67 million.

We, we do not wish to rely on our legislators' pork barrel to shoulder the students' government's responsibility. We demand that the present administration prioritize education over debt servicing and military expenditures. If only the Arroyo administration provided education and other social services for the people, we believe that progressive legislators from Bayan Muna, Anakpawis and Gabriela would find no use for the pork barrel.

—ROSA RAMOS,
Spirited president,
National Union of Students of the Philippines, 22-A Visayas Ave., San Isidro St., Cubao, Quezon City

Tired, disgusted and poor

THE ELECTIONS are over. The winners, the elected ones, are now rejoicing. Meanwhile, poor Aunt de la Cruz starts—again—to wish for the fulfillment of their promises, as he marches the so-called political servants easily transform themselves into diamonds of redemption and greed. In recent events show, they are dominion dynamic, only in switching themselves through their potentials; they are brilliant only as far as their welfare is concerned.

What is sorrow is the fourteen of poor Juan, many of our public officials become scrupulous right after the elections. Still pretentious freedom of the oppressed and friends of the masses during the campaign, they turn distant undefending Juan. Well Juan has again to huddle down to work by his bareness to save his children from hunger and poverty.

Is there still hope of changing the unbelievable qualities of our policemen? Juan is now tired and disgusted. There is still a remedy. Dear God, help Juan to awaken the consciousness of his "public servants" for the sake of the country.

—JULIUS BARAJAS CUETO,
626 Diamond Rd.,
Phiflor Compound,
Bambang Baja, Batangas City

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CEBU PACIFIC

Across the NATION

Flood victims seek gov't compensation

By Tonette Orejas
INQ Central Luzon Desk

ARAYAT, Pampanga—The National Irrigation Administration bought 50 hectares of land in Barangay San Mauro Ilaya, spending almost P4 million since June although these were not occupied or affected by the operations of a Japanese-funded Cong Dadong Dam, documents showed.

But the agency has yet to pay damages to at least 81 tenants whose farms, covering 93 hectares, had been submerged by backflowing waters since the dam began operating in 2002, according to barangay councilor Rodolfo Fernando, chair of the agrarian committee.

Water from the Pampanga River and the Chico had spread to the farms in San Mauro instead of entering the artificial channel created for the diversion dam. The farms had turned into swamplands.

Barangay councilor Florentino Ilaya said this happened because the NIA closed or partially opened the gates of the dam to maintain its maximum water level of 8.5 meters.

The newly acquired 14 hectares property comprising Lots 1081 and 7, is located east of some of the submerged farms, maps showed.

Old earth dike

Those are protected by an old but still functional earth dike and lined by irrigation canals. The tractors on Saturday saw rice still planted in those lands. In contrast, watchers have gotten on nearby flooded farms.

Pointing to what used to be his plot, tenant Ricardo Liuag said he used to cultivate sometimes there during the dry season and rain during the wet season.

"I've been unable to farm for almost two years now. That date has made life very difficult for me and my family," Liuag, who is in his 60s, said.

Some 4 km away, the dam loomed south of the village.

The NIA had paid him and 26 other tenants at least P5 per square meter in "financial assistance for submerged farms," according to a Feb. 20, 2003 letter from Antonio Garcia, assistant manager of the dam's builder, the NIA's Pampanga Delta Development Project.

Fernando, also a tenant, said he and 55 others have not received any financial help yet.

All of them are assuring the promised damage compensation equivalent to P5.0 per square meter, he said. They are cracking to get the payments as the NIA announced it was wrapping up work for the PDDP.

Only the dam will be maintained to irrigate some 13,000 hectares of land in eastern Pampanga, PDDP Manager Reynaldo Mercias said.

In the case of the newly acquired 14 hectares, the NIA paid P5M for every square meter.

At Lot 1081-, which is almost 5 hectares, the NIA changed the land owner's P24M,000 in "representation/legal assistance," documents showed.

Cong Dadong Dam made life difficult for us, say tenants

Right-of-way claims

Dennis Libor and four other owners of Lot 1081 claimed they were "not aware" that the NIA acquired almost the whole property. He said they only got less than P150,000 each from the NIA.

In February the PDDP requested P69,306 million for payments of right-of-way (ROW) claims on at least 281 hectares of land. The original ROW budget was P50 million, documents showed.

Mercias earlier confirmed the project had displaced 816 farmers in Arayat. In recall in a phone interview he was verifying if the case of Lots 1081 and 7 was a likely addition to alleged anomalous transactions on ROW.

Mercias, Garcia and auditor Leon Datumbon were the signatories in checks for ROW payments.

The flooding of farms in San Mateo, Mercias said, was "not anticipated." That, he added, the compensation was not included in the project costs.

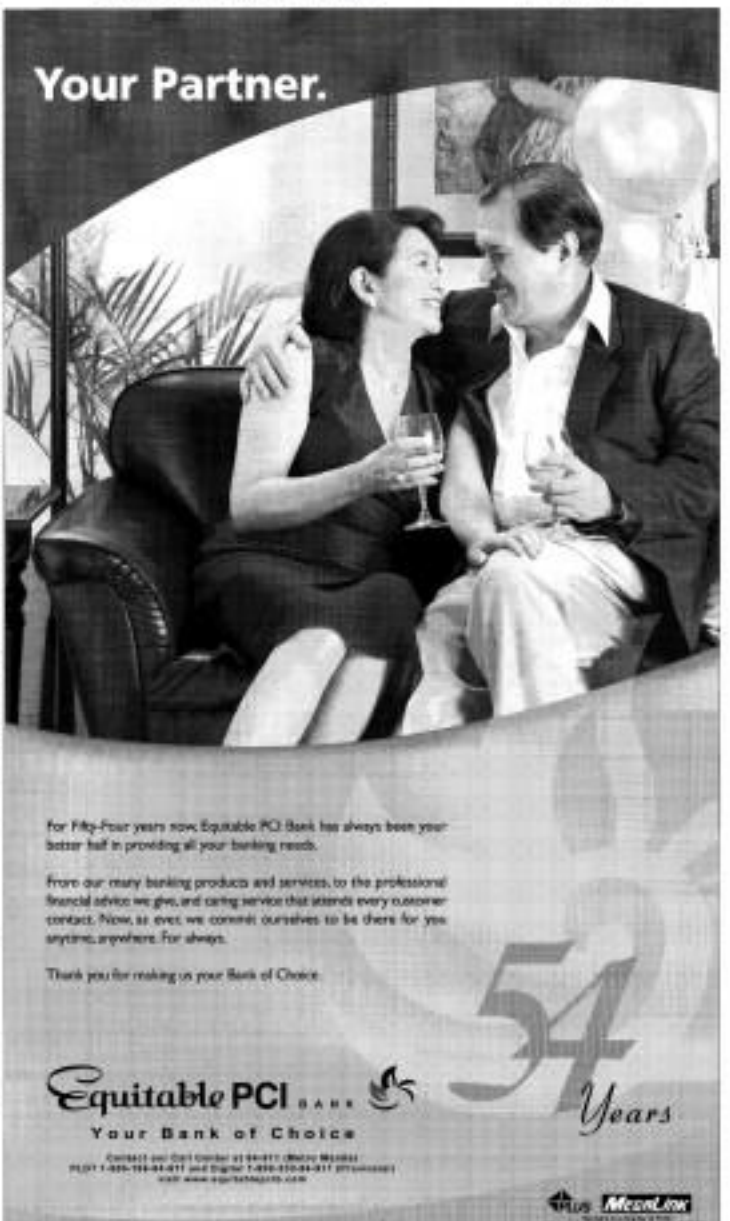
Requests for additional funds had already been made, he said.

The dam, built on a P3.4-billion loan from Japan, not only displaced many tenants in San Mauro, Barangay Councilor Rando Lucas said the floods last month were the worst to have hit the village since the floods in 1972.

"It reached up to chest high. The few days we lived on the roofs of our houses," said Rolando Sandile, 75.

Floods used to be below the waist and last relatively two days, he recalled.

The strong currents have eroded a 2-km stretch of the San Mateo banks, forcing many families there to leave soon.



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ARMY soldiers from the Southern Luzon Command join the cleanup on Dalahican beach in Quezon province.

Environmentalists elated, dismayed at beach cleanup

By Dolly T. Mallari Jr.
Phil Southern Luzon Bureau

LUCBAN CITY—Environmentalists, who have been mustering the support of volunteers beach cleaners along the coast of Quezon province, expressed mixed feelings of jubilation and dismay during Friday's celebration of the 19th International Coastal Cleanup Day.

Juliet Ibrahim of the Tanggol Kalikasan, who coordinated the event, said the multitude that swamped the village of Dalahican confirmed her assertion that it has universal reach.

"It's a wonderful Saturday morning compared to previous coastal cleanup days. It seemed that the residents have already learned the virtue of clean surroundings," Ibrahim told newsmen.

But in Races Village near the debris of the city's main river that empties in Tayabas Bay, another member of Tanggol Kalikasan found that the close to 3,000 mangroves that were planted by volunteers two years ago had all died, apparently due to toxic waste coming from a factory upstream.

"It's a disgusting sight, especially on a day such as this when we commune with nature," said Janet Grandiano Prado, who also hosts a weekly program, "Kuwento ng Kalikasan," on radio dwFI.

She said her group would immediately conduct an investigation and file a case against the erring firm.

"These mangroves represent a symbolical effort of volunteers to protect the environment, then they were just easily burned because of irresponsible waste disposal," she said.

Picnic garbage

Barrios said thousands of volunteers—students, Citizens Army Training cadres, government and private employees, civic-minded residents, soldiers and policemen—joined the cleanup activities in the coastal villages.

Some of the volunteers came from as far as the south of Real City Golf and Leisure Bay, she said.

"Based on the initial feedback that I received and the low volume of trash along the shore, most of the coastal residents are now practicing coastal cleanup year-round," Ibrahim said.

"The garbage that we gathered up was mostly left behind by picnickers," said Gary Palma, a senior at the Quezon National High School.

Staff members of Quezon Prep, Princess Alcala, the principal secretary behind the Bayabas Bay protection and rehabilitation, distributed flyers to the coastal residents, explaining the importance of garbage segregation.

"Educating the people and reaching them the virtue of clean surroundings is a continuing process and practice. We always have to remind the people," Alcala said.

Divers' version

He said the local group of divers would also conduct their own version of cleanup soon. "It's our annual underwater cleanup day."

Alcala said close to 300 artificial reefs had already been placed in different parts of the bay.

"During weekends, boatloads of foreigners could be seen having a field day harvesting different kinds of fish, mostly by means of bomb, fine and cyanide. They left the earth for their school allowance," Alcala said.

Kate Wren of the provincial Department of Environment and Natural Resources recalled that in the past, the beach fronting the town of Baler ran with "gruesome" or human waste.

"It is now a thing of the past," she said.

Marcel Magadia, Infanticom chair, said eight public toilets had been built in strategic parts of the barangay.

'We are sorry, no cleanup for us today'

By Dolly Mallari Jr.
Phil Southern Luzon Bureau

LUCBAN CITY—At the throng of volunteers swept the long shore of the Dalahican beach, at least 50 families occupying the sandbox road of the coastline could not help simply watching the goodly activity.

"Every year, we have also participated in the coastal cleanup. But this time, even if we want to join the volunteers, we simply can't because we are having our own life-and-death battle. We are sorry, there is no cleanup for us today," Delia Waldo, 49.

Waldo's home was among those demolished last Wednesday by persons allegedly hired by a certain family that, residents said, was claiming the site as part of its ancestral property in the area.

Heavily armed members of the city's police Special Weapons and Tactics (Swat) team allegedly assisted the demolition crew.

Court order

Most of the shacks were flattened to the ground. Some children were seen still rummaging for whatever they could salvage inside the structures.

Waldo said the demolition crew arrived at around 9 a.m. "They just showed us a court order for the demolition. Most of us simply cried because all the males in the area were out either fishing or pedaling 'pedyak' (tricycle) for a living," she said.

The residents said that for a long time, they had been living in the area being claimed by two families. "But not one of them can show us proof, such as a title, that the land really legally belongs to them," Waldo said.

According to Marcel Magadia, barangay chair, the settlers and one of the families had been battling in courts for seven years already.

"Apparently, they lost the case, that's why the enactment order was issued by the court. It's a legal question," he said. "They were duly informed of the impending enactment even before the decision. They could not feign ignorance of the case."

Relief assistance

Magadia said the local social welfare department and the barangay office had been assisting the displaced families.

Betty Riego, who claimed of having worked for the family for eight years, insisted that the site was an integral part of its property. "I know where their 'realtor' (property line marker) is. Way, way far from our location," she said.

The residents said they were always on guard because of the threat that their shanties' houses would be set on fire. "We will not leave this place unless we are fully convinced that this land really belongs to them," Waldo said.

Most fishermen in the area are members of the militant Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mangingisda at Pilipinas or Pamalakaya, while the women are affiliated with Bayan Muna.

The residents have formed the "Injunction vs Dalmig Buhangin."

"Formerly, this site was full of thorny arenas. But we developed this into a livable community," Waldo said.

"We also managed to maintain the cleanliness of the beach in front of us because we know that garbage thrown in the sea would affect the catch of our fishermen brothers someday," she said.

She added: "The pristine beach also serves as the playground of our children."

The residents said they could not just simply raze their area in surrender. "We have nowhere to go. What is being allowed to us by City Hall is only temporary relocation in the abandoned airport in Barangay Bukbog Isnac," Waldo said.

House probe of US soldiers' part in raid urged

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Allegations of American servicemen participating in a military raid in Tim-Timl in May that led to the killing of three villagers may trigger a House inquiry, Deputy Speaker Gerry Salapuddin said.

But Salapuddin said he wanted Tim-Timl Brgy. Assist Mudtahir to "file the necessary instruments/ Congress so that we will hear legal basis for a congressional inquiry in aid of legislation."

Earlier, villagers in Gumalak town filed sworn statements of murder and human rights abuses before the Commission on Human Rights against four US servicemen, and Philippine military and police officials who assisted Umapay Island on May 20.

At least 11 alleged cases were recorded as raid victims, and three of them were later killed, they alleged.

Military officials have admitted that a raid was conducted on the island, but it was against Abu Sayyaf bandits hiding there. Then Sanchez Commercial chief Lt. Gen. Roy Kyamko, said three bandits were killed and eight others were captured. There was no mention of any participation of US forces.

The residents led by Barangay Spanghet chair Aldo Baca, said three killed were not Abu Sayyaf members but unarmed farmers.

The US servicemen from Third Batch maintenance at the refugees, they said.

Salapuddin said that if the charges were true, then the American servicemen violated the provisions of the Visiting Forces Agreement.

He said the presence of US troops in Mindanao were sanctioned by the VFA but only for joint RP-US military exercises, not actual combat operations with Filipino soldiers.

Although Rep. Teo Rosales called on the Department of Foreign Affairs to conduct a separate inquiry "to determine the culprits or suspects who have been shooting those innocent civilians in broad daylight."

"They should be arrested. We are condemning the act...more so if there were American soldiers involved because it was not stipulated in the Visiting Forces Agreement," Rosales told the Inquirer.

Asst. Manuel Mamburao, Maj. Gen. Cirilo Sarmiento said that American troops were involved in the raid, which he described as a legitimate operation.

"On the part of the AFP, action was taken, there was investigation done and there was no finding of human rights violation," Sarga said.

Asst. Manuel Mamburao, CHR director for Western Mindanao, said the complainants were "very credible."

PO1 Wenifredo Cite, a local policeman, "assured that American soldiers participated in the operation," he said. Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Soldiers capture NPA leader

DAVAO CITY—Government troops arrested an alleged leader of the communist New People's Army (NPA) in Sitio Mabilibig, Barangay Nanyo, Panabo City on Thursday afternoon.

Col. Eduardo del Rosario, 72nd Force Commander, said Manuel Ramos, alias Commander Nepoy, was arrested by virtue of several arrest warrants issued in connection with a string of criminal cases.

Del Rosario said Ramos, alleged head of the NPA's Front Committee 51, was involved in a series of ban and equipment burning cases and harassment of civilians in Mabini, Nagsin and Pagabuhan-Garcia town.

Members of the 72nd Infantry Battalion tagged Ramos at around 4 p.m. at his house in Purok 5 in Sitio Mabilibig.

But a human rights group, Karapatan, described the arrest as illegal.

Atdel Casilao, Karapatan secretary general, questioned the circumstances of the arrest wondering why the soldiers did not coordinate with the Panabo police.

Casilao said the incident was plain abduction after witnesses told them that the soldiers came in plainclothes, wore bonnets, and were on board a multicab without a license plate.

He claimed that Ramos' wife Dolores and 2-year-old daughter Mylene were taken.

But 3rd Bonifacio said Dolores and Mylene were not arrested. "They just were with Ramos when they were brought to the 72nd IB headquarters," he said. Anthony S. Alikala, PDI Mindanao Bureau

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4 Negros women held by prostitution ring

BACOLOD CITY—Four Negrense women who were lured into prostitution were being held by a syndicate in Sabah, Malaysia, the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration said Friday.

Rep. Ignacio Arroyo (Negros Occidental, 5th district) said he was informed by the Owwa that the women were still in Sabah and efforts would be made to rescue them.

The women, who are natives of Hinigaran, Himamaylan, Canlaon and Candoni, were recruited to work in karaoke bars in Sabah but ended up in prostitution rings.

Provincial officials learned about their plight when one of the women was able to send a text message to Vice Gov. Jeidee Zayco saying that they were duped by their recruiter and had become victims of white slavery.

Former provincial board member Enrique Montilla, who has been assisting Arroyo in the search for the four, said "the Owwa has confirmed that they are still in the shelters of a syndicate that has forced them into prostitution."

Arroyo said he would also seek the help of the Malaysian ambassador if the one week limit.

Former Rep. Apolinario Lozada, who now hosts the weekly "OPM Hotline" television show over ATC cable channel, said Malaysian Embassy officials had given assurance that they would trace the women.

Gov. Joseph Marañon advised women applying for jobs abroad to be careful so that they would not fall into the hands of unscrupulous recruiters. Carla B. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau

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Please be notified of the Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of the Pamantasan ng Araullo (Araullo University), Inc. to be held on 06 October 2004 at 3:00 p.m., at Araullo University, Cabanatuan City, with the following Agenda:

1. Call to Order
2. Notice and Quorum
3. Ratification of Appointment of External Auditor
4. Reading and Approval of Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements for Fiscal Year 2003-2004
5. Amendments or Articles of Incorporation and By-laws
6. Increase in Authorized Capital Stock
7. Reduction in Par Value
8. Election of Directors
9. Adjournment

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Lawmaker urges legalized 'jueteng' to ease fiscal crisis

From page A1

Senator Sotto[illegible] Reyes when he voiced support for the legalization of the illegal numbers game.

Dominguez said the government's administration that the country was in fiscal crisis made the legalization of jueteng "more plausible and attractive."

"[If we] legalize all numbers games, local government units can generate an income and do away with their internal revenue allotments," he said.

Dominguez, chair of the House games and amusements committee in the 9th and 10th Congress, said that 20 years ago, his committee prepared reports that the government was set to earn as much as P12 billion from legalized jueteng. He, however, did not explain how the committee arrived at the figure.

"In 1994, when we made our comprehensive compilation across the country, jueteng was based only to Luzon because the Muslims had monte and Mindanao had vending," Dominguez said.

"Now jueteng is rampant. [It's] everywhere," he said.

Dominguez's bill includes other illegal numbers games such as masiao. Initial[illegible] is based on jai alai and cockfighting. (based on the Philippine Ha[illegible] Association's fiscal gains survey).

Under Dominguez's scheme, the government would get 40 percent of the gross income from jueteng, while the bookmaker (collector) or bookie would get 10 percent and the operator, 50 percent.

The government's take would be divided among the municipal government (20 percent), the provincial government (10 percent) and the national government (10 percent).

As for a cluster[illegible], it will get 20 percent while the remaining 1[illegible] percent would go to the national government.

The cube (cluster) collector and cobrador (bet writer/er) will be taxed out because the current setup in towns and cities shows that they are responsible for rigging jueteng draws, according to Dominguez.

Partially one of the main purposes of the bill is to protect the betting public. Ensuring the winner's nowadays is not transparent," he said.

The cube and cobrador look at the number combinations that have the least number of bets and make draw the winners, he said.

"Computerizing the process would draw more bettors," he said. "Draw jueteng is legalized, we will have more or fewer the number of bettors now."

VIGILANCE rights advocates and relatives of martial law victims remember their martyred loved ones during the blessing and unveiling of a monument in Iloilo City. [illegible]

Monument honors victims of martial law in Iloilo City

From page A1

spectator Panay Island were read amid cheers of "Ang ding na Tandhang Lupa," a song now widely played during protest rallies.

The eight-foot-tall and six-foot-wide lead, mark, made of concrete and granite tiles, stands near the center of historic Plaza Libertad.

Human rights groups—Pamay Alliance Kaugnayan, Mothers and Relatives against Tyranny (Marvyr), Samahan ng mga Ex-Detainee Laban sa Detensyon at para sa Amnestiya (Selda), and the Ecumenical Movement for Justice and Peace—led a fund campaign that raised P[illegible],000 for the project.

3 clenched fists

Three arms with clenched fists emerge from the structure. Architect Jeremiah Molero said the figures depicted the struggle of women, children and men to break free of oppression and repression.

A similar monument was erected in Bulan City in Cagsa in December 2003.

Reminder of 'dark days'

Jaro Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, who led the rites, said the monument in Iloilo City was a reminder of the "dark days" after martial law was declared on Sept. 21, 1972.

He said the dictatorship was a chapter in the country's history that should be remembered, "not to ill[illegible] with hatred ... but to fill ourselves with gratitude that we have been delivered from it."

At the same time, he prayed "that the martyrs and desaparecidos (missing) of this regime may find justification, deliverance and salvation in the next life."

Josefa Manuel, the chair of Marvyr, said the fallen patriots surely never expected such a monument to be erected, since they had sought no recognition.

"We salute them because despite the risk and amid [illegible] fears, they persevered," Manuel said. "The mass not [illegible] this monument had just a solid slab of stone. We must continue to live the ideals that they died for."

Samuel Torres, secretary general of Pamay Alliance Kaugnayan, said that 18 years after the dictator's ouster, the victims' families were still in the dark.

On top of this, he said, "[illegible] of the dictatorship" remained. So cried the "no permit, no rally policy" that Marcos imposed under Batas Pambansa Blg. 880, warrantless arrests, and arbitrary exercises of activism and political dissension.

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Muslim congressmen to hold back-channel talks with MILF leaders

DARBEMOZA (CTC)...An all-Muslim team from the House of Representatives has been established for back-channel talks with the leadership of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) ahead of peace talks with the government in Malaysia next month.

Deputy Speaker for Mindanao Unity Sulaiapuddin said Friday.

Sulaiapuddin told the Inquirer the team, which was formed by Speaker Jose de Venecia, would "help the national government expedite the peace process."

"We will [speak with the MILF] as ambassadors. There might be certain issues they may want to confide to us but we can respond to," said Sulaiapuddin, one of the leaders of the team, when asked if this was an official mission.

Sulaiapuddin said that because the congressmen belonged to the legislative branch of government, they would not be considered as negotiators.

But he said there were three major issues the team hoped to tackle with the MILF leadership.

These were the MILF's demand for a United Nations-supervised referendum, similar to that conducted in East Timor, to determine the fate of the Bangsamoro people; the issue on ancestral domain; and the demobilization of MILF forces once a peace deal is signed.

Sulaiapuddin said lawyers discussed during the back-channel talks would be tackled when the team reports to Congress.

He said the team's recommendations would be submitted to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Iranun Muslim Rep. Majid Tucunan, a member of the team, said they would "[move on getting the real feeling and sentiments of the MILF."

He said that despite lack of time, the team was hopeful it could achieve something significant.

Sulaiapuddin said Maguindanao Rep. Simeon Datumanong had started communicating with MILF chair Murad Ebrahim to [illegible] the terms of the meeting.

"We are just waiting for their go-signal," he said. — Aida F. Ilagan, *PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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Militant lawmakers decry cut in pork

From page A1

Casiño and Joel Virador of Bayan Muna, Crispin "Ka Bel" Beltran and Rafael "Ka Paeng" Mariano of Anakpawis, and Liza Maza of Gabriela have joined many of their colleagues in the party-list "slow" in protesting the proposed cut pruning only P10 million each in pork barrel for the last six months of the year.

They said they must get their full share of P20 million each for the second half of 2004.

Each member of the House of Representatives is allocated P70 million in Priority Development Assistance Funds (PDAF), the official name of the pork barrel, every year and each senator, P200 million.

Pork barrel refers to the funds in the national budget for projects identified by members of Congress primarily for the purpose of negotiating theirsupport with their constituents. It is a source of kickbacks and campaign funds for unscrupulous members.

The Catholic Church and other groups have urged lawmakers to give up their pork to the benefit the flood victims.

In a letter dated Sept. 9 to Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., the party-list representatives protested the "uneven and grossly unfair allocation" of the PDAF.

"It is our collective conviction that each House member is equally distinguished and honorable," they wrote De Venecia.

The lawmakers signed the letter just days after their "politics of change" bloc declared that they were renouncing the pork barrel amid the public clamor for its abolition.

To help answer the budget deficit next year, Malacañang cut by 46 percent the pork barrel allocation of legislators in the proposed budget for 2005.

For scrapping

As Aug. 28 statement by Bayan Muna read: "Grumpo ... unequivocally and confidently stated today that his group is for the scrapping of the uneven pork barrel system which is being exploited by selfish and partisan interests."

In his statement of Aug. 20, Grumpo declared: "Bayan Muna would confidently embrace a political setup without the pork barrel."

In contrast, the ideological rivals of Grumpo's group did not sign the "Erin Mi Speaker" letter. They were Representatives Loreta Ann Rosales, Mario Aguja and Theresa Bonoan-Barzaga of Akbayan and Rep. Satur Ocampo of Partido ng Manggagawa.

Akbayan and Partido ng Manggagawa are identified with camps that had bolted the makoy-maka (blind) movement.

The other party-list lawmakers who signed the Sept. 9 letter to De Venecia were Eufrocino Coda (Coop-Natcco), Emerson Calayan (Veterans Federation Party), Sonny Rose Madarcos (Association of Philippine Electric Cooperatives), Eulogio Magsaysay (Alliance of Volunteer Educators) and Teodoro Elmo Abra (Agapay).

Termites Wilde (Apec), Florencio Noel (Ako Bicol), Rosa Christian Seriono (Bokal), Armand Sumaoang (Ang Laban ng Indigenong Pilipino), Irene Atienza (Bokal) and Joel Maranoon (Citizen's Battle Against Corruption) also signed.

Unfair allocation

Among those who did not sign the letter were Representatives Benjamin Cruz (Bokal), Molly Hamamac (Aksyon Mindanao) and Edgar Valdez (Apec).

"What is he formally conveys our collective concerns and resentments over the uneven and grossly unfair allocation of the PDAF to some—if not most—of our colleagues in the party-list (bloc)," the signatories said.

Citing information from Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr. (LP-Camarines Sur), the signatories said some of those "lucky ones" up with only P10 million each for the last six months of fiscal year 2004 with the P20-million balance to be settled later."

Because the 12th Congress opened in July, each House member is entitled to P35 million, not the full P70 million.

The party-list lawmakers said findings, who chairs the House appropriations committee, told them that there were only 19 party-list lawmakers in 2003 as opposed to 34 who were elected this year.

There are also three new House members representing newly created legislative districts.

"The (findings) holds the view that because the 2004 budget was a reenacted one, he allegedly finds it extremely difficult to create budget-wise, a bigger number not previously anticipated," the party-list lawmakers said.

They argued that it was their "well-considered position that the 37 party-list representatives, who were members of the 12th Congress, had no vested or inchoate right over the fiscal year 2004 budget."

23 new members

They asserted that "no one can anticipate with certainty the outcome of the party-list elections of 2004."

"Second, in 2003, and notwithstanding the fact that seven party-list representatives were in only in July of said year ... each one was allocated P70 million of PDAF," the legislators said.

They also pointed out that the enabling summary of the national budget proposal for fiscal year 2005 "shows that a total of 219 members of the House of Representatives were earmarked for the fiscal years 2003, 2004 and 2005."

"This means that the 2003-2005 budget appropriations of least 10 party-list representatives. There are only 24 party-list representatives this year, and a total of 226 House members—or an aggregate balance of 23 more House members."

They noted that the Party-List System Act of Republic Act No. 7941 provides that party-list representatives shall be entitled to the same salaries and emoluments as regular members of the House of Representatives."

Magtubo and someone asked him to sign the letter but he declined. "The Partido ng Manggagawa is consistent with its stand that the pork barrel should be abolished, especially in this time of fiscal crisis," he said.

"In the first place, legislators are first and foremost lawmakers. We make laws. We are not project managers," Magtubo said.

In a separate interview, Akbayan's Rosales said her colleagues, Aguja, had previously signed the petition but withdrew it later.

"Akbayan is for the abolition of pork. We are just being consistent," Rosales said.

A TOURIST tries a kayak at the Dos Palmas Arrecefil Island Resort. AFP

Koreans revive resort laid low by terror

From page A1

down the South Koreans.

"Before the (Ho Sayyaf) attack, Dos Palmas never marketed itself abroad," says Leode Tremoya, the resort's marketing manager.

"We found the foreign market, especially the South Koreans, were less susceptible to those (terrorism) messages."

Repackaged

When the resort reopened in March 2002, it was repackaged for the Asian market.

More than 1,500 South Koreans checked in last year, and their numbers topped 1,500 in the first seven months of 2004, making up as much as 70 percent of its guests.

The Koreans know little about the May 2001 kidnapping. But they don't seem to be bothered by it either.

Kdeuschtzecher Ann Jin-sung, 26, who was thrilled by the scuba diving, fishing and sojourns in surrounding small islets, says: "It's no problem to me. It happens everywhere."

"I have been in Nanjing, Indonesia, but Dos Palmas is better," she says.

"Korea is also dangerous," economist vacationing housewife Jung Sun-hee, 48, after all, hostile North Korea lies just across the border back home, she notes.

Tremoya says the resort now has the same occupancy levels as before the Abu Sayyaf raid.

Lotte Tours, a South Korean travel agency, began offering a charter package visit of Seoul in June via the national flag carrier Philippine Airlines. The flights land in Puerto Princesa, a 90-minute boat ride away from Dos Palmas.

A $1,300 package buys a tourist seven days of fun in the tropical resort.

The charter flights boosted Dos Palmas occupancy rate to 60 percent in the normally lean months of July and August, Tremoya says. Charter flights resume in January.

He said group profits should rise 42.6 percent from 2003 to about P100.5 million this year.

Attraction

The hotel resorter are attracted by Dos Palmas' atmosphere of an endless beach more seemingly lowed in the middle of the ocean although it is conspicuously priced and quite accessible, Tremoya says.

A guest can average spends $2,000 for a three-day stay on the 24-hectare island.

The resort has its own power plant, waste treatment facility and desalination plant. Security has been discreetly bustled up to avoid a repeat of the kidnappings.

Wide-brewer and a multimillion-dollar radar system check for any unauthorized boats in the area.

A native of Marinas has been posted as farewell to ruin the serenity guards and other resort personnel.

"If trouble breaks out, we will back those guys up," a Dos Palmas worker told AFP pointing to the M-14-toting guards while he cradled a government-issued Garand rifle on his lap.

Tremoya says Filipinos are returning to Dos Palmas as well.

"You can see the perception change. People have put it behind them and are going to another dimension." AFP

JAH ITALIAAH cameraman examines a starfish during a trip on a small islet off Dos Dos Palmas resort. AFP

Fire hits cooking oil warehouse

POLICE VISIBILITY

Members of the Eastern Police District Special Weapons and Tactics team display their high-powered firearms before being deployed around the Muntinlupa commercial center Sunday

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

A TWO-ROOM fire hit a warehouse of used cooking oil in Alabang Zapote Road in Alabang City early yesterday. No one was hurt but about P5 million in property was lost.

The fire broke out about 2:30 a.m. at the back of the lined and 1 Merchandise warehouse in the target Tipang, where drums of used cooking oil were stored.

The fire engulfed used cooking oil in big feed makers, city fire chief Glenn Tadeo told the business.

Non-quality spread because the one-story warehouse was put up made of wood, Tadeo said.

Firefighters had a hard time getting near the burning area because the narrow lanes...the only street leading to the warehouse—was too narrow for most of the fire trucks.

Nonetheless, shanties at the back of the warehouse...

The warehouse was razed and the cause of the blaze...

US declares RP ports, maritime facilities secure

By Cielos S. Bedia

THE UNITED States has cleared Philippine ports and maritime facilities in terms of security and adequate safeguards against terrorism, according to the Transportation Department.

Transport Undersecretary Cesilio Perilla said the US Coast Guard, in a logs, Subic's, did not include the Philippines in the list of 17 countries to be fully compliant with the new international port security requirements.

The International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code prescribed by the United Nations early...

Without an ISPS clearance, Philippine vessels would not be allowed to dock at a foreign port the same way that foreign vessels could not use or dock on local ports that have not complied with the new global standards.

Perilla, head of the country's Office for Transportation Security, said that not being included in the US Coast Guard list means that there were adequate antiterrorism measures in place in the Philippines' port and maritime facilities.

The ISPS Code was adopted by the International Maritime Organization to ensure the safety and security of all ships and ports all over the world.

The Code, to be strictly enforced effective July 1, sets the standards by which ships and ports will be allowed to transport and handle goods traded by sea.

Philippine shipowners in the United States, for example, run the risk of being refused entry if, neither the ship nor any of its last ten ports of call is not ISPS-compliant.

The transport official said the positive developments should allay the fears of exporters and importers, businessmen engaged in interisland maritime trade, and the country's maritime sector.

"We should always be on our toes and ensure that port security measures under the ISPS Code are effectively and responsibly implemented," he stressed.

He said ISPS Code compliant ports must consistently follow the international security requirements, as a high or benchmark for security and ensure a declaration of security that details specific arrangements between vessels and port facilities.

The ISPS Code amends the 30-year-old Safety of Life at Sea Convention or SOLAS.

Stray bullet kills boy rescuing pet rabbit

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

IT WAS all too sudden and unexpected.

Eric Cruz Pandoring, 11, was only trying to rescue his pet rabbit when a gun bullet...

It was gathered that Pandoring was playing with a rabbit that was given to him as a gift by an uncle who bought the animal in Baguio.

At about 1:30:30 p.m., the rabbit reportedly crawled and got stuck under their TV unit in the living room of their home in Bancuran Village, Navotas.

According to the police, Pandoring was trying to rescue the rabbit when he accidentally knocked off a .38-caliber revolver from its secret hiding place under the TV rack.

The gun fell and went off as it hit the floor. A bullet whizzed out of the gun's muzzle and hit the boy in the belly, police said.

However, Allen, 32, a cousin of Pandoring, told the Inquirer a somewhat different story.

Allen said that when the rabbit got stuck under the TV rack, the boy got an umbrella and began poking under the furniture in an effort to free his pet.

Suddenly Allen added, as Pandoring was poking under the TV rack, a gunshot rang out.

None of his parents or immediate family members could be reached to confirm any of the stories.

Police said Pandoring, who was the youngest of eight children, was rushed by one of his brothers to the Tondo General Hospital where he died while undergoing treatment, police said.

MISSING

JAY MENDOZA

JAGNO Rivera Mendoza, also known as Jay Mendoza, 21, left home on Sept. 12 at 8:30 a.m. to attend Mass at the Dominican of Child Jesus Parish, BF Homes, Parañaque City.

He was wearing a gray short-sleeved shirt, jeans and black leather shoes.

Mendoza is 5'6" tall, fair complexioned has a good build.

Anyone who has information on his whereabouts may contact 893-8338712, 09175261483, 893-0499-3661 and 3602669-1367.

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■ Stray bullet kills boy rescuing pet rabbit /A23

Cops reminded: Patrol cars for official use only

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

IT IS the way things are supposed to be, but three policemen have to be reminded just the same: Police cars are for official use only.

In a memorandum, National Capital Region Police Office Director Avelino Razon Jr. reminded his men never to use police vehicles for unauthorized or personal use.

The directive was in support to the Land Transportation Office campaign against the improper use of government vehicles.

He told the Inquirer yesterday he already directed the district directors and station commanders in the metropolis to monitor users of patrol cars and other police vehicles.

Policemen found violating this directive shall face sanctions, he added.

In the same memorandum, Razon specifically warned his men against using police vehicles in going to "off-limits areas" like cockpit arenas, night spots and pickle bars.

He encouraged the public to report to the police if they know of any lawmaker using police vehicles for personal purposes.

Earlier, Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza was told government employees and officials against unauthorized use of government vehicles.

There had been numerous criticisms of government officials and their families using "for official use only" vehicles in going to malls, restaurants or resort school.

Mendoza urged the public not to be reluctant in apprehending erring drivers of said plate vehicles.

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PLDT

NCRPO rolls police stations onto the streets

By Magpue C. Ortiz

PEOPLE usually catch a bus, but these buses are designed to catch people, criminals in particular.

Beginning today, the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) will be deploying mobile police stations in Metro Manila.

These buses are meant to enhance police visibility and security in the metropolis, especially with the advent of the Christmas season, NCRPO chief Director Avelino Razon Jr. said.

Razon said the ordinary buses provided by Philippine National Police Chief Director General Edgar Aglipay were transformed into police stations on wheels, equipped with communication devices.

The detention cells could accommodate about 30 to 40 persons, the NCRPO chief said.

Razon added that the buses would be manned by policemen who would patrol, apprehend, conduct investigations, and even do civic-and-community services.

"The assigned investigators were instructed to decongest all cases of public services, depending on the need or situation," Razon said.

NCRPO spokesperson Chief Insp. Gerry Agustol said three mobile police stations and two rescue cars would initially be deployed.

The NCRPO would add two more if the special buses seem to be evenly distributed in Metro Manila's five police districts, he added.

Cop watchdog in Manila forms own ethics body

By Terry V. Quinsaat

WHILE busy handling complaints against erring lawmen, it still has to look at itself to see how it is doing.

Realizing such a need, the People's Law Enforcement Board (PLEB) of Manila has begun setting up an ethics committee to handle complaints against its officers.

"It would look at allegations against PLEB members," said PLEB Manila Executive Director Francesco Domalo-Manzano, who called the committee a self-policing body within the PLEB.

The PLEB is a quasi-judicial body that handles administrative complaints against policemen who may have committed abuses in Manila.

Manzano, however, said the PLEB received at least seven complaints from both defendants and complainants in PLEB cases alleging that some board members had decided their cases unfairly.

PLEB Manila has a board for each of Manila's six districts, with four members and one chair hearing and deciding cases against lawmen.

The board, composed of barangay chairmen, members of the City Council, and lawyers, could suspend a policeman or dismiss him from the service.

The ethics committee will watch over board members.

Manzano said it might be composed of PLEB overall chair Teodoro Angeles, Mayor Lito Atienza or his representative, and possibly a Manila councilor.

The ethics committee, set to first meet on October, would also take up problems in performance of board members, including their attendance in PLEB hearings.

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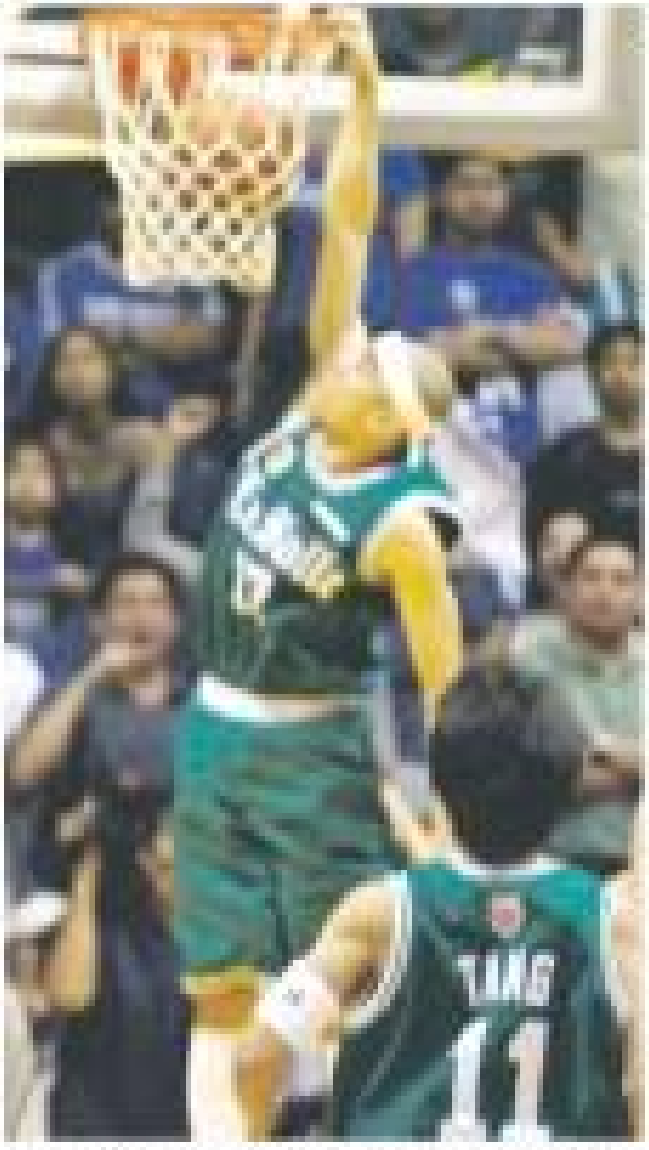

CROWD CLASH: Pau Cardona puts an exclamation point to La Salle's rout of Adamson with a dunk and then embraces injured King Eagle Larry Penaflor (right) after the highly emotional game.

Vengeful Archers rip Eagles, reach Finals

By Jasmine M. Payo

IF THERE'S one thing that will surely rev up the La Salle Archers in the UAAP basketball Finals, it's the fact they've just seen their arch rivals packing.

And Pau Cardona made sure it's a heartbreaking sendoff as he relentlessly banged home his eleventh for a game-high 24 points as the Archers eliminated the Ateneo Eagles, 80-65, in their semifinal showdown yesterday at the jampacked Araneta Coliseum.

The Archers, who booked their 15th Finals appearance in 17 years, will battle the big Green Machine in a best-of-three championship series starting this Thursday also at the Big Dome.

"We're back again in the Finals. One thing that is also important is we missed the stigma of 2003 and 2004," said coach Franz Pumaren, whose Archers lost to Ateneo in the 2003 championship series and were later denied a Finals appearance by the Eagles in 2004.

"A lot of critics were doubting us, especially when we went 8-6 [into last round] and some even said that we won't make it to the Finals. But we're really in good shape and are geared that we belong [in the Finals]. Hopefully, we can answer this one," said Pumaren after their eighth straight win, the longest streak this season.

Cardona powered a 7-0 run early in the second half that gave La Salle a 39-30 lead even as Ateneo lost its offensive touch as Eagle ace Enrico Villanueva went cold the rest. The Eagle lowest output was a 31-point production against the Taft-based Green Archers.

Jewish Community

Jervic Cu-Unjieng and La Salle's Dodge and a JV Casio triple dispersed the lead to 14, 49-35, by

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T'chargers, Aces down separate Korean rivals

By Jane Navarro

KAILAN Ferrerira and Ronnald Tahid spurred the whole Shell revealed classic stats and the Turbocharger regained the All Telecom Knights, 99-87, Saturday night in the PBA Science Stadium basketball League's goodwill series at the San Juan Gym.

Ferrerira fired 16 of his game-high 23 points while Tahid was unstoppable in the final quarter as the Turbochargers stormed back from 15 points down to thrash pulling away.

Shell ended up 30 points in the fourth period while putting the stuffs on the Knights' snipers, who were limited to only 11 points.

Undefeated defense also buried Alaska's 90-80 triumph over the fifth time in the current tussle with the Aces holding their opponents scoreless in the final encounters.

After losing Ja Heung and Jun Hee Seok drilled in back-to-back triples to give the Koreans an 80-85 edge, the Aces came up with a smothering defense.

Mike Cortes and Ali Peek scored 15 points each for the Aces, who overcame the last quarter heroics of EBE import Ronald Chavez and Jordan Sonn had 21.

The Knights absorbed their third straight outlook against a PBA hallclub while the Aces took their first win after defending their game against Perlla the other night.

Leonard White, the former Fairbreak import playing for the Knights, now limited action due to a back stomach. After scoring an average of 30.5 points against Sta. Lucia Realty and Coca-Cola, White was held to nine markers this time.

Korean national team mainman Chan Hee Choi and Cho Sung Hyun paced the Knights with 23 and 18 points, respectively.

Choi and Cho played for the Korean gunner that eliminated the SP squad made up of PBA stars in the semifinals of the 2002 Asiad hand.

TUMBO moves a pass in this file photo.

POC presidency could be won with duds

IT had the makings of a mismatch, but Oscar De La Hoya also disappointed a lot of fans the way he fell and surrendered to Luis Ortiz yesterday.

De La Hoya, the awful underdog, could have pummeled what was left of the hapless if he had survived Round Eighteen.

It was, indeed, a tragic ending to De La Hoya, one of the most popular ring gladiators today, left for on his face in plight he had hoped would define his career.

Here at home, the fight for the presidency of the Philippine Olympic Committee likewise appears to be shaping but into somethingish.

The election for the POC top seat, to be contested by reigning POC chief Jose Emilio and Peping Cojuangco, a grizzled politician, has been slated for November.

But a number, check among, veteran sports [illegible] fans, having unfortunate circumstances, Cojuangco would surrender Church.

In fact, there were suggestions the sports body need not resort to a vote as Cojuangco could be declared POC chief by acclamation.

This perceived overall reign being enjoyed by Cojuangco, of course, has been largely boosted by the untold plug made by Star Gentleman Mike Iovaro.

Mr. Arroyo made what was readily perceived as an outright endorsement when he declared that a politician of Cojuangco's power and influence could help unify the country's fractious sports hierarchy.

The statement was made last week during the induction of officers of the Philippine Amateur Track and Field Association (Patafa), whose head, Go Teng Kok, has been openly backing for a Cojuangco takeover at the POC.

Thus, having Philippine sports totally in the hands of a politician, could indeed be a hysterical solution.

It's very easy to assume that politics is the single biggest obstacle to sports development in the country.

Well, truth to [illegible] had various solutions to no avail.

So, although it was akin to stating the [illegible] is the necessary evil that could save Philippine sports, there were those who readily applauded the first gentleman's stand.

Whether it was hysterical or absurd, the Arroyo solution was deemed urgent in these times of great need and unanimity. Cojuangco had many resources both in the foreign community.

But as still, if not totally intimating, acquiring the full-on endorsement was Cojuangco playing expertly the role of political kingpin.

He did not only bolster the problems beseiling SP sports.

In a one-on-one with the top men's Mayor Sherry Reyes, Cojuangco said these problems paled in comparison to what he's been through in politics.

Now, listen. To give us a sample of how he would run SP sports, Cojuangco, for starters, said he would sell the historic Rizal Memorial Sports Complex and then, establish a national training center in Clark Field, Pampanga.

Those, indeed, are positive [illegible] ideas.

And we could only ask why others before Cojuangco had not thought of this noble idea.

Oops. Hold it, please. Before we could speak [illegible] by applaud, we got this warning by Cojuangco was to be totally detained.

It seems [illegible] retirement has just tipped us that Cojuangco, unlike beating great Pancho Villa, might end up winning by being dead.

Why? It was heard that, much to Cojuangco as even President Gloria Arroyo would like to sell the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex, the proposed deal could not prosper.

Reason: the historic complex belongs to the City of Manila.

This information was given by a [illegible] source at the RMSC who said records show the land was occupied by the complex had been loaned to the old Philippine Amateur Athletic Federation (PAAF) by the City of Manila.

If we remember right, there had been a court litigation on this matter some years ago.

Well, step in Cojuangco's initial solution to sporting ills had approved, it may help if he first remedied [illegible] legal problem.

He could indeed sell the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex, but Cojuangco would have to buy it first. Thus, you see, could be rather as complicated as getting a henchman caught in a whirlwind-pot-struggle by all the [illegible].

Village Hoops at aSK slated

PREPARATIONS are under way for the ongoing next month of the Village Hoops, a by-barangay-based basketball tournament organized by the athletic sport Kamp (aSK) in cooperation with Makati and Cantin aSK, a [illegible] square-meter athletic center located in the heart of Global City in Taguig, prides itself with a name of the [illegible] indoor-basketball court, venue of the [illegible] week-long event, according to Kamp chair Arnold Laurel.

"The court is complete and modern equipment such as a triple wood flooring, tempered glass backstop and scorer [illegible] ring, all of which are [illegible] requirements to the National Basketball Association," Laurel said.

He added that aSK also has facilities for other sports like volleyball, baseball, soft ball, volleyball, softball, [illegible] soccer, football, and martial arts where all sport in the middle.

Teams from Magallanes, Bel-Air, San Lorenzo, Meyrille, Ayala and Forbes [illegible] have confirmed their participation.

The Village Hoops also includes the GSC, Orion Sportsmen and Bel-Air Blue Jay [illegible] Parties will have forty PBA players Peter Games as entertainers.

For inquiries, call 856-3001 or 856-6431 or log onto www.aspk.com.ph.

Rosales, Delasin crumble with 77s

1 shot off the lead overnight, Jenny struggles in wet weather to be 7 adrift

JENNY Rosales faded in capitalize on an early morning tee-off as she teamed to a five-over-par 77 in the second round Saturday (Sunday in Manila) and virtually surrendered her bid for the crown in the Safeway Classic at the Columbia Edgewater Country Club in Portland, Oregon.

In a complete turnaround from her brilliant first-round 66on Friday when she fired a five-under 67 on her 28th birthday, Rosales went birdieless and stumbled with five bogeys, four of them in the front nine.

From a tie for second place, just a stroke off the leader, Rosales plummeted to a share of 22nd place at 144, seven strokes off new leader Lorie Kane and Candie Kung who shot a 69 and 68, respectively, to tie for top spot at 137.

Annika Sorenstam stands her ground with a 69 to join Annie Mendiz (72) and Carin Koch (67) in third place on 139.

Filipina-American Timothy Delasin, in 88th spot after Round 1, also posted a 77 and fell to 59th at 150.

Grace Park (69) and Christina Kim (71) were in a group at 4 under after enduring wind gusts to 30 kph and occasional downpours.

"It's just a test of survival," Kane said. "You don't think of par, you just try to hit solid shots."

First-round play was suspended for more than an hour because of a thunderstorm and another squall stopped play in darkness fell. Thirty-one players had to complete their opening rounds Saturday morning.

Kane had an early second-round tee-time, but was still pulled by rain and wind.

"There will be some people that this weather bothers, but I'm not going to let it bother me," the Canadian said. "Simple as that."

It turned out Rosales and Delasin were not the worst victims of the unforgiving playing conditions.

Rose rookie Brandi Jacobs, the leader after the first round with a 66, crumbled with an 82 to miss the cut.

Kane has not won a tournament since 2000, when she held off Sorenstam in the LPGA Takefuji Classic.

Kung is still seeking her first ever victory of the year after winning three times last season.

Sorenstam, who won last week after taking the month off, started the day at 2 under, then quietly crept up the leaderboard, reaching 5-under until a bogey on the par-4 13th knocked her back. AFP, With a report from Jong Aycoin

HAZE: Madamba crosses the finish line of the Milo qualifying run in Roxas City.

Azarcon, Madamba rule Caraga Milo race elims

BUTUAN CITY—Geovanny Azarcon is proud too but for the defending champion **adult veteran Hazel Madamba was undaunted** leaped in topping the Caraga region elimination race of the 28th National Milo Marathon yesterday at the river plaza here.

Azarcon docked site hour, eight minutes and 22 seconds to rule the men's 21-km qualifying race. Last year's top placer, Arnold Gonzaning, came in second at 1:09:52 while Rafael Tejada placed third at 1:10:00.

For the second straight year, the race with the fastest time there was disqualified from the race. Arnold Tesabi was declared an illegal runner because he already ran and won in the elimination race in Cagayan de Oro City.

Madamba, a former 10-km Milo Marathon, **timed** 1:20:13. The 1999 National finals-run her record to do was not promoted at all due to **the lack of worthy opposition.**

Madamba, an enlisted member of the Philippine Navy stationed in Luzon, **ruled the Olongapo City leg last year.**

Rose Antoni (1:21:44) and last year's winner, Mary Jane Cabig (1:21:02), placed second and third, respectively.

The top three finishers in the race held in partnership with Cebu Pacific, Globe Handyphone, Bayview Park Hotel, adidas and the Department of Tourism will represent the region in the 42.8 National Finals slated on Nov. 14 in Metro Manila.

The top three finishers in the 5-K fun run were Bruner Anabe (17:47), Jb Mabinay (17:00) and Ramar Jimlon (17:28) in the men's division, and Jocelyn Arobling (23:04), Jennie Sarido (23:38) and Cherie Elegado (23:51) in the female side.

More than 3,000 runners answered the **marching gun fired by Mayor Democrito Plaza.**

Antoque protégé tops Beam Tarlac 5K

MAMBOO Corpus didn't fail **his mentor, Rey Antoque, as he** overtook Reynaldo de Los Reyes **in the final 1.5 kilometers** to win the men's title of the Beam Zero-D Bandung Fizzy yesterday in Tarlac City.

Los Reyes posted **his second straight** victory in three weeks by handily topping the women's 5.8 run.

Corpus, an Antoque **protégé** who **trains** like the veteran Antoque, timed 27 minutes and 38 seconds to beat De Los Reyes (28:00) in the race organized by Media Runners and Sports Promotions **and sponsored** by Beam Toothpaste and Zero-D Sodas Drinks.

Rogelio Bell of **Lumpiaw placed third** with a time of 30:16.

Vandana, who won the overall Manila leg recently, moved Community of Santo Tomas teammate Bernadita Bitog-ao to fifty timed 23:21, and 23:03, respectively. Third was Elena Ermilao (24:13).

Completing the men's top five were Virgilio Tuico/Tico (28:29) and Joseph Reserva (28:41). Adlenay de los Santos (28:44) and Felino Castillo (24:49) rounded out the first five finishers in the distaff race.

Top gunners on target with new ball

By Jose Navarro

BOX SCORE Reynaldo each eight three-pointers the other night. Kenneth Duremdes and Paulo Mendoza superbly hit their shots from the corners, and so did John Arigo against the Kings one in the ongoing PBA-BIG goodwill series.

All four shooters made history by shooting the new ball the Philippine Basketball Association will use when it opens its new season next month, although they have yet to develop a feel for the spheroid.

The ball, known as Molten GL7, has more grooves for better grip and handling than the ordinary one. The traditional basketball has eight grooves while the Molten GL7 has an additional four grooves meshed by yet less stripes.

"I don't feel the difference yet but once we get used to it... it could probably improve my shooting," said Arigo, who made 11 points mostly from the outside during their 82-79 win over the fifth team on basketball.

Sta. Lucia Realty's Dominador fired 16 points against the 3R Telecom Knights last week, 25 of them in the second half, while Mendoza shot terribly from three-point range.

"I can't tell which ball is better but I had an excellent grip on the leather that time," said Dario.

Three days later, it took to shot the lights out at the four-in Agoncillo College gym in Manila after knocking in eight triples using the same yellow striped ball during the FedEx-RBL fours encounter.

After Reynaldo downed his last three-pointer, the game was stopped, with the Express ahead, 87-83, in the fourth due to a slippery floor.

PBA chief executive Fidel Mangonon said top teams in the Fiesta conference will start using the Molten GL7 to all of its sanctioned tournaments next year.

"The scoring in the PBA has improved by 6.16 points in the Fiesta Conference. The Molten GL7 could increase scoring by another five points in the coming season," said Mangonon.

ENIQUELLE O'Neal leads Los Lakers too much of his blame in Los Angeles.

Shaq: Lakers used me as a scapegoat

SANTA MONICA, California— Shaquille O'Neal believes the Los Angeles Lakers made him The Big Scapegoat.

"It was just guys upstairs who can't chop up and do what they're supposed to do. They've got to throw a scapegoat, and I don't know what I'm saving enough to be that scapegoat," said O'Neal, waited by the Lakers to Miami in July.

"When's going to be the scapegoat [next]? Who are they going to send it to now?" O'Neal said with a laugh.

The Heat's new center was back in town Saturday to host a kids' basketball camp.

O'Neal broke had he was called by Mainard for the Lakers' failure to win the NBA title the past two seasons—including this year's loss to Detroit—after winning three in a row.

"My thing is, if I'm going to be the scapegoat, let me be in charge and let me do it my way," said O'Neal, whose friction with coach Phil Jackson would've been well done mented. "So if I'm in charge and everybody knows I'm in charge and we're doing it my way and it don't work, then they can say 'hey, you did it.'

Next I'll say, 'You know what, I did it.'"

Despite these differences while with the Lakers, O'Neal said he was pleased that a mutual, mutual change against Bryant were dropped earlier this month.

"I'm glad that he got off. That never want to see a player of his caliber go down for something like that," O'Neal said. "How he can go back to being a family man."

After the Lakers announced that Phil Jackson wouldn't be retained as coach, O'Neal asked to be traded. Since Los Angeles dealt Gary Payton to Boston and Karl Malone may decide to play elsewhere, Bryant likely will be the Lakers' only remaining marquee name next season. AP

OSCAR De La Hoya grimaces as he tries to get up from the canvas.

Hopkins k
De La Hoy

LAS VEGAS—Bernard Hopkins suddenly ended a close fight with two left hooks to the body in the ninth round Saturday night to stop Oscar De La Hoya and gain his bid to become the undisputed middleweight champion.

The punches put De La Hoya on the canvas, as his hands and knees in obvious pain. When De La Hoya rolled over on his back, referee Kenny Bayless stopped the fight at 1:26 of the ninth.

While Hopkins celebrated, De La Hoya remained on his knees, his face buried in his gloves. He repeatedly pounded the canvas as if frustration after being stopped for the first time in his 36-fight career.

"I felt a sense of urgency," Hopkins said. "I wasn't sure if I was winning or not."

Hopkins (40-3-1, 32 knockouts) was ahead on two scorecards and behind on a third in a cautiously fought bout when he suddenly landed the punches just before De La Hoya's ref- eyes to waste his undisputed middleweight title in his 10th title defense.

"A well-placed body shot," De La Hoya said.

De La Hoya (37-4) was a 3-1 underdog in only his second fight as a middleweight and was taking on a champion who hadn't lost in 11 years.

"I tried to do the impossible on paper—beat the middleweight champ coming up from 130 pounds," De La Hoya said.

Hopkins fought cautiously the first half of the fight, giving both De La Hoya and the solicit crowd at the MGM Grand arena some cause for optimism. De La Hoya, who many thought would win on volume, was the aggressor for many of the early exchanges as he moved forward against Hopkins.

"He came to fight," Hopkins said. "He didn't come to run or look for a gift from the judges."

The pro-De La Hoya crowd cheered their fighter from the opening bell, screaming every time he landed a punch. Hopkins bought unconcerned by the sounds were out, his corner told him to pick up the pace and pressure De La Hoya more.

Still, De La Hoya was holding the fight come to a stunning ignored the shocked crowd a stayed on the canvas.

"He caught me right on the said. "Believe me, I liked getting knocked."

De La Hoya, who weighed fight to 158 lb (71 kg), had more as a middleweight, but this time was a big upset known Felix Trinidad, Hopkins since Roy Jones Jr. beat him and he was praised for the p lifetime.

De La Hoya fought despi 11 stitches to repair a cut hand suffered three days fight. In his dressing room fight, he said the cut ca part of his hand just beneath t get treat slightly swollen and he be allowed time to have the on it.

But he said the hand did him, only the punches from Hopkins. "I felt a sense of urgency," he said. "I wasn't sure if I was winning or not."

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Vengeful Archers rip Eagles . . .

Turn to page A22

the end of the third period.

Cambaba then started the fourth quarter with a triple while Alonzo opened with three consecutive turnovers. La Salle's relentless attack gave the Archers an 18-point buffer, 57-39, less than five minutes remaining.

Magnum Membrere tried to spark an inconsistent Eagles' bench to fresh triples, but the Eagles could only pull within 10 points, 62-52, with less than seven minutes left.

There was no hint of the lopsided finish in the first half, though, which La Salle took at 30-28 on Membrere turned the ball over 17 times. The Archers also dominated the point early, 22-13.

It was a sad ending for the Eagles, who returned on top almost the entire season before losing six of their last nine games.

Palmares extended Ateneo coach Bata's Arenas passing to after the game and congratulated him for his valiant effort. "I told him not to listen to all this. He deserved to be in Ateneo. He worked hard for it and he's a good fellow," said Palmares.

In junior play, the DLS Taper Cubs and the Ateneo Eaglets' feigned another bout of three shootout rivalry series starting Thursday. The Cubs outlasted the La Salle Bengals, 75-71, while the Eaglets whipped their CP Junior Minerons, 60-43.

The scores

First Game (m)

ADAMSON (75) — Yanka 12, Cruzamora 17, Ilaya 10, Nwakwo 8, Nikolic 5, Kalaw 4, Mendoza 4, Mejia 2, Arboleda 2, Quiambao 2, Ilaya 10 — 75

ATENEO (71) — Ilaya 10, Cruz 9, Ramirez 8, Dela Cruz 7, Acuna 6, Mendoza 5, Nadal 5, Perez 5, Santos 4, Tagaro 4, Ramos 2, Sandoval — 71

UP (62) — Serrano 14, Ramos 11, Lucas 11, Cruz 10, Santos 8, Ilaya 8, Reyes 2, Ramos 2, Sandoval — 62

DLSU (75) — Cardona 19, Diaz 15, Dimaz 13, Cruz 7, Acuna 6, Alcantara 5, Paz 5, Santos 3, Tang 3, Ramos 2

ATENEO (60) — Montemayor 19, Tenorio 16, Diaz 10, Cruz 9, Velasco 7, Ramos 6, Ilaya 5, Acuna 3, Diaz 2, Sandoval 2, Tan 2, Alcantara 2, Antonio, Ramos, Sandoval

Standings (W-L): Ateneo 6-0, La Salle 5-1, Adamson 4-2, UP 3-3, San Beda 3-3, Letran 2-4, FEU 2-4, NU 1-5, UST 0-6

Ex-pro Solis n

FORMER PBA star Al Solis of Tefilo Eagles and Hap Garcia of Sear Bagtzis have been named South and North selection coaches, respectively for the first MIC (Marion al Basketball Championship) All-Star weekend set Oct. 1 Q.C/Mapúa City.

"I'm very excited to be chosen as coach of the South All-Stars," said Solis, a former top-rated point guard in the pro league. "I hope this will be the start of something big in my coaching career."

TIERRO Impressive

Tierro

TIERRO player (Sam Tierro is currently in great rating, competi German Interna teams that end this lan

One of the four co 23 year-old "Sam I owed, he has awar semifinals twice aft throughout qualifying

The tough field c money titles over t men and international Although the women not stated ITF or ATP classes were participat players with ranges A dogs are not in Ireland's players.

Tierro's performa impressed in many w the leading tennis Germany who reache

Pacquiao rival decisions Salido, retains twin featherweight titles

LAS VEGAS, Nevada—Mexico's Juan Manuel Marquez retained his World Boxing Association and International Boxing Federation featherweight titles here Saturday with a 12-round unanimous decision over compatriot Orlando Salido.

Marquez recovered his knockout (KO) 2-1 with 21 wins under the slammer, while Salido suffered his second loss in 30 outings.

The three judges scored it 115-111, 115-113 and 116-110 for Marquez, 28.

Marquez was making the third defense of the IBF belt he won in February of last year by tactical win with a seventh-round technical knockout of conqueror Manuel Medina. It was his second defense of the IBA crown he won in November of 2003 with victory over Javier Calosa.

Marquez (who retained both of their rights against Filipino Manny Pacquiao via a controversial draw. AFP

SALIDO Mexican Marquez of Mexico, who earned a controversial draw against Filipino Manny Pacquiao, is more convincing this time against compatriot Orlando Salido.

knocks out ya in ninth

BERNARD Hopkins proves he is boxing's middleweight king. AP

amed All-Star coach

wous Germans

Benilde, Lyceum prop bids

DEFENDING champion College of St. Benilde and Lyceum of the Philippines team its entertaining fashion-basketball rivalry tonight for undefeated seats in the NCAA. This season basketball tournaments on the St. Scholastica gym.

At the RTU gym, University of Asia & the Pacific hurled into the undefeated ranks of seniors volleyball by stopping Mapua College, 26-23, 16-11, 26-31.

Upstart Arsenal mauled Far Eastern University, 77-57, to set title Rural Technological University for the lead at 6-0.

In juniors play, UA 'ig Stella Del had downed Benilde-College, 84-16.

Europe nears Ryder title via record rout

SERGIO Garcia celebrates another shot by the Europeans. AP

BLOOMFIELD TOWNSHIP, Michigan—Sergio Garcia removed the flag from the 18th hole and waved it over his head. Padraig Harrington tossed his glove and cap into crowd that dunged itself in European flags and led sang "Ole, Ole!" from the top of its lungs. Darren Clarke lit up another cigar.

There was no need to wait for this juggernaut of a European team to celebrate at the Ryder Cup.

Sunday looks like a mere formality.

"I never in my wildest dreams would have thought we would have a six-point lead," captain Bernhard Langer said. "We came here as defending champions. We have the cup with us and we want to take it back home. So far, so good."

Strike, it's been awesome.

Two English rookies in their Ryder Cup debut destroyed the pivotal point Sunday morning. Sergio Garcia, Lee Westwood and Europe's relentless start pounded the Americans in the afternoon.

When it was over, Europe had an 11-5 lead—its largest ever—and needed to win only three of 12 singles matches to capture the cup.

"It is possible!" Kate, it's possible," Phil Mickelson said of an American comeback. "It is. It's! Probably not. But all morons and purposes, we've likely lost the cup. But we're going to try and win it."

It was the largest two-day lead since 1967, when Jack Nicklaus opened the Ryder Cup by introducing his team as "The 20 greatest golfers in the world."

TIGER Woods cuts a forlorn figure as the US team takes another beating. AP

The first 22 flat words at Oakland Hills belong to Europe.

US captain Hal Sutton will send out his players on Sunday in the order they qualified—from Tiger Woods at No. 1 to Jeremy Gish at No. 12. Whatever a team is this far behind, it usually puts its best players at the top of the lineup to try to create momentum. Trouble is, Sutton has to also who his best players are at this Ryder Cup.

Woods, Mickelson and Davis Love III have earned only one point. Jim Furyk and Chad Campbell didn't fare any

Maybe that's only Sutton didn't bother to mug his finger and offer an unctuous predictions that "I've got a good feeling about this," a hospitable first Countdown at Brookline in 1999 when he was behind 10-6.

Sutton looked more his age—a ripe 47—as he tried to put a positive spin on the debacle.

"I pushed them as hard as I could," he said. "We almost responded this morning, and we have energy after that."

Europe has so thoroughly outplayed the home team that Paul Casey asked to go off first with hopes of playing Woods, telling Langer he has beaten him in the two tournaments they have played this year.

Asked about seeing Woods, Mickelson and Love at the top of the lineup, Langer looked as confused as rookies as he has all week.

"I'm not worried at all," Langer said. "I'm actually pretty sure and convinced that, out of the first three matches, I'll be very surprised if we don't get two points."

And it doesn't matter whom Europe sends out to play them.

After the Americans staged an impressive rally in better ball matches—they had the point, tied for a time—Europe seized control of behind Casey and David Howell, who won the last two holes against Campbell and Furyk for a 1-up victory that sent a surge of confidence through their teammates. AP

Bonds now preparing for playoffs

SAN FRANCISCO—Barry Bonds' black leather clubhouse chair was fully outfitted, and the San Francisco slugger hoisted both of his wide-a-wave mementos as other joined the 700-homer vet-club.

The distinction of another milestone is gone, and Bonds is using every chance he can to save energy and prepare himself to play every game for the Giants' playoff push.

The past week has truly been unusually exhausting for the six-time NL MVP.

Bonds joined an exclusive club Friday night—only Hoke Aaron (755) and Hank Aaron (714) have hit more homers—when he connected on the third inning against Jake Peavy for an even homer No. 700. It was his fourth game going his the back.

He hit a home run to left-center field Monday, on for a solo shot, becoming the first player to reach 700 in 31 years. Bonds wanted no time getting to 701.

On Saturday, the 40-year-old Bonds led off the second inning against Padres 6th hander Chan Ho Park with a solo shot to right-center on the first pitch. A tribute to Bonds was played on the scoreboard before the game, and he received a long ovation when he jogged out to take his position in left field and again when he stepped into the batter's box. AP

They call it 'The Ordeal at Oakland Hills'

BLOOMFIELD TOWNSHIP, Michigan—Talk about getting more bang for your buck.

Paul McGinley, an obscure Irishman ranked 497th in the world, has contributed more points to his team's Ryder Cup cause than Tiger Woods, Jim's more character Englishman David Howell, ranked one spot further down and playing in his first and only match ever Saturday, near has as many as Phil Mickelson has here in three.

Spaniard Sergio Garcia, on the other hand, has almost as many points as the entire US team.

"Believe it or not," Garcia said, offering a grin, "there are people who can play golf outside of the states."

The 25th installment of the Ryder Cup will go down in golf history as "The Ordeal at Oakland Hills."

The last time a team of overrated Americans came to for such a beating was only last month—anybody still remember the 2004 Olympic basketball team?—but that shouldn't make this one any easier to take.

There are a dozen explanations for how the second day of the competition closed with Europe ahead 11-5, the biggest lead since the current format went into effect, but they can all be squeezed into one word: teamwork.

The United States arrived with the world's No. 2 (and No. 4 players (Woods and Mickelson), three of the top 10, and five guys who earned Lexapro between them.

Europe's cope players Padraig Harrington, was ranked eighth, and the next highest team by anybody on the continental side will be the first.

The average American pro ranked 10th and spent almost as much on hair for his private jet as some of his opponents made last season.

Even Europe's No. 5 player ranked 20th and usually flew coach.

But the numbers that matter on the fairways and greens at the Ryder Cup increasingly tilt toward the Europeans. They've won six of the last nine and 70%. That's like the national of all.

Asked about a comeback, Mickelson said, "Is it possible? Sure it's possible, is it likely? Probably not." AP

PAL CHAMPS
Cebu Portland Cement Co. president Jose Concepcion de Leon (left) and Philippine Amateur Athletic Federation president Peping Cojuangco (right) flank Cebu Portland Cement Co. chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan as they receive the championship trophy after the Cement Co. defeated Philippine Air Force, 3-2, in the Philippine Amateur Athletic Federation Open Basketball Championship at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum yesterday. Pangilinan is also the chairman of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. PHOTO BY JOEY DALUMPINES

US Open champ wins anew

BALI, Indonesia—US Open champion Svetlana Kuznetsova overpowered unseeded Germen Martina Müllerkorn 6-1, 6-4, Sunday to win the Wismilak International and extend her unbeaten streak to 11 games.

The victory was the Russian's fifth this year, and her second here on the Indonesian resort island of Bali. It means she will move up a spot to number five in the world rankings.

"It was tough to go all the way through after winning those the US Open," said Kuznetsova. "I was just doing my best."

Müllerkorn, who was playing in her first tour final, was unable to settle in the opening set against a barrage of powerful forehand by the Russian. She quickly found herself trailing 5-0.

Müllerkorn played several spectacular winners in the second set, and fanned a break point against Kuznetsova. The Russian raised it with a forehand volley and Müllerkorn netted with shrug.

Kuznetsova broke the Germans service in the seventh game, when Müllerkorn served a double fault and landed backhand. The 19-year-old then served out to win the match.

"Martina couldn't find anything to play against me," said Kuznetsova. AP

KUZNETSOVA

Life goes on after Japan league strike

TOKYO—Life went on in Japanese baseball Sunday as players, staging the first-ever strike in the 70-year history of the game here, tried to keep fans happy with autograph sessions and other events.

"Don't let the lights go out on pro baseball," read the front-page headline in the Nikkan Sports daily, showing a full-page picture of a stick-thank ball park amid a glittering night scene in the port city of Fukuhara.

But players, opposed to the merger of two financially troubled clubs, kept themselves busy during the two-day walk-out which halted 11 weekend matches in the crucial final phase of the pennant races.

They mainly trained at home grounds on Saturday and mingled with fans on Sunday across the country where baseball is almost religious.

Autograph sessions were also scheduled at baseball stadiums in Yokohama, Osaka, Sapporo and Fukuoka. AFP

More support thrown to ABC hosting plans

SPORTS patrons from Hotel Lloyd Inc. vice-chief banker of the SP Cristanto Lhuillier meet team, expressed his optimism of the country hosting the ABC Olympic qualifiers following initial talks between Cebuana Lhuillier and the PBA.

"It has always been our intention to work with all the parties concerned with Philippine basketball toward developing an integrated and long-term basketball development program here," Lhuillier said. "Hosting next year's ABC championships in the country, as opportunity offered to us when I met with Hon officials in Taipei during the Asian Cup, still certainly show this finally, everyone is cooperating to see it be put."

The PBA initiated the talks with Cebuana Lhuillier since the latter already has an existing sponsorship agreement with the BAP basketball's ruling body in the country until 2006.

"We are presently looking at the proposed program by the PBA that seeks to expand their role in hosting the national team beyond their original agreement with the BAP to take care of only the Asian Games," said Benny Francisco, Cebuana Lhuillier's spread project director and a former national cager.

NOTICE OF DISSOLUTION

Notice is hereby given that the Amended Articles of Incorporation of MMLDC, INC. (the "Corporation") which shortened the term of its corporate existence to end on October 15, 2004 and thereby dissolving the said corporation on said date, has been approved by its Board of Directors and shareholders at duly constituted meetings both held on September 1, 2004.

All persons having claims against said corporation are requested to present same at the Corporation's principal place of business located at the RIF Lopez Building, Ortigas Avenue, Pasig City.

This announcement will serve as notice to all concerned of the legal dissolution of the aforesaid corporation.

GIL S. SANDIGO
Corporate Secretary

GAB approves Sept. 25 WBA Showdown

THE GAMES and Amusements Board has approved the staging of the "WBF Showdown" card on Sept. 25 at the Manila Hilton in Pasay City to commemorate the 100th birth anniversary of Pacific ace "Pajo" Sarmiento.

GAB chair Eduardo Villanueva said the decision to sanction the promotion "until all documents will be received" same after a hearing was conducted regarding the World Boxing Federation's upcoming bouts.

Villanueva is also slated to meet WBF president Mick Croucher of Australia on Sept. 23 to discuss the WBF's bid to establish its presence in the country.

"This is a good opportunity for Filipino boxers to excel," said Villanueva. Salvio Lagumbay, Gerald Baxter

RACE HOTSHOT
Ulysses Munsiguing, 18, cruises to a fourth straight race-a best time of the day honors in the Saloon Grand Prix at GM Fairview.

Indian envoy backs FIBL

CUDAN LIVING

Manuel R. Virgo

LOW PROFILE Dilip Redlrood is one of the most underrated stars in Philippine sports. Still, he is all talk when it comes to organizing sporting events. A man with amazing reserves of energy, zeal and grit, Dilip is a former marathon organizer and presently the commissioner of the Filipino-Indian Basketball League (FIBL).

Now in his early 60s, Dilip is best remembered for organizing the popular Colombo 10K Classic, California Bahala 100K Navy Dutch Boy Cycling Classic, California Bahala50K Cycling Race and the Pinoys International Duathlon, a run-bike competition held in Makati City Hendon stupefaction carts and special shows during his college days at LaSalle University.

After spending four and a half years in Burbank, California, where he worked for a clothing company, Dilip returned to the Philippines and launched the FIBL in 1999 to promote sports and brotherhood among the members of the Filipino-Indian community.

The FIBL opens its 18th year on Sunday, Sept. 26, at the Makati Coliseum, with four teams in the fold, namely, the defending champion Bombay Bombers, who will be minding the services of two-time FIBL Most Valuable Player Kishore Mirpuri (not to be confused with former champion Knights, the Stage of ex-PBA player Mike Advincula and the Blue Blades.

On Saturday, Sept. 25, the FIBL will also conduct a pre-opening cocktail party for team owners, players, sponsors from Honda Cars Caloocan and Globe Platinum and special guests Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, PBA Commissioner Noli Eala and CNN Correspondent Chino Trinidad. The affair will be held at the Forbes Park residence of India's ambassador to the Philippines, Ambassador Surendra Sharma, in whose honor this year's FIBL Ambassador's Cup is being held.

Although he has no pretensions that it will take a long time before the league can produce Fil-Indian players who can dominate the PBA, it does not mean that the Fil-Indians do not have the talent. "In fact," Dilip stressed, "one of our players, Rikki Advani, used to play for Barangay Ginebra before he retired to concentrate on his business." He added there are several promising rookies in the FIBL as persons, including a shooter, Pritchpal Brar, who plays for the Blue Blades, and Bobby Singhal, point guard Michael Sukhrani, whose game reminded me of Alaska playmaker Mike Cortez.

* * *

LETRAN REUNION. Founded 384 years ago, Colegio de San Juan de Letran produced many national leaders, including Philippine Presidents Emilio Aguinaldo, Manuel Quezon, Sergio Osmeña and Jose Laurel. Letran also produced prominent scholars Rafael de Leon and Renato Lluch in track and field, Filemon Mariano, Antonio Villanueva, Sebastiano Paguio, Lance Munoz, Freddie Webb and modern "basketboy" Lim in basketball, the Aberagan brothers and Sean Sorgo in taekwondo, Rizalista Nantilus in swimming and former Gen. Tito Sotto in boxing, among others.

Quezon was the first president of the defunct Philippine Amateur Athletic Federation, forerunner of the Philippine Olympic Committee, while many other Letranites were also commanding sports leaders like former POC president Julian Maliwanag. Eugenio "Gene" Pineda is boxing, Salvador Andrada in tennis, Rey Janeza Ramon in rowing and Fr. Anthony Meneses Jr. in the Philippine Sports Commission.

On Saturday, Oct. 16, Letran will host a reunion of its former athletes starting at 2 p.m. in Letran Intramuros. Deceased athletes will be represented by their nearest kin. On the other hand, former athletic moderators and coaches are also invited, including POC president Cojuo Tayag, athlete Sabas Francisco Tayag, who is in attendance in Beijing. Only nine schools had hosting duty, Letran and University of the Philippines.

The others invited are those who made good but entered the national scene, namely Luis Edwards, Bernardo Arcenas, Alfredo Sagsabuena and Agustin Salgado. Another is Law of President Macapagal-Arroyo. The other invitees are those who contributed to sports development in Letran, including Supreme Court Justice Cayetano Arellano, football players Manuel Nieto Jr., Benito Legaspi, the Pedroso brothers, Senator Lito Lapid, Vicente Apilan and cheerleader Cesar Delarosa, to name a few.

Paragua still in hunt for GM result

FILIPINO International Master Mark Paragua remained on target for his second straight crown and the third and final norm he needs to earn a full grandmaster's title by scoring 1.5 points in two late rounds in the second leg of the Akaldo Tournament in Odessa, Ukraine.

The 20-year-old Paragua forged the point with Christian Pedersen of Denmark in the 10th round and then proceeded to outplay Russian IM Sergey Volkov in the 11th to push his total to a tournament-leading 9.0 points.

But in order to finally gain the GM title, the Philippines' No. 1 ranked player must battle his last two matches, including a crucial 14th round duel with Russian GM Artiom Timofeyev.

Paragua's final round opponent, IM Tony Rozman—is no pushover either.

The young Ukrainian is rock solidly already a GM, having earned his third norm in the first of the three-leg elimination.

Rozman is currently the world's second youngest GM at 14 years, seven months and 15 days.

Paragua gained the black pieces against Timofeyev, one of the three GMs in the tournament, and white versus the dangerous Rozman.

The 10-man Category 13 event with an average rating of 2434 requires a player to score at least 7.5 points to gain a GM norm and 7.0 points for an IM norm. Marlon Bernardino

PHOTO Paragua rounds two wins in his last two matches

Stand-in IM Garma vaults into lead

TAGAYTAY CITY—International Master Chito Garma rolled to his second straight win last night to grab the sole lead in the National Chess Championships at the Tagaytay International Convention Center here.

Garma, a two-time Olympian who made the tournament only as one of four replacements, whipped erstwhile co-leader and top qualifier National Master Oliver Barbosa in 23 moves of Philidor Defense.

"I feel so surprised—my qualification was always in doubt because I was not sure if I would play," said Garma, who beat IM Emmanuel Neniza in the first round.

Hogging the spotlight with Garma was 16-year-old boy wonder Wesley So, who bounced back from an opening round loss to IM Leonardo Cuhia with a stunning 37-move win over Pde Illanes Jose Noel Sakot in their Bishop Opening encounter.

Cuhia settled for a draw the hard way against NM Emmanuel Arnaiz after 51 moves of another Bishop Opening.

Top seed Ronald Dalilan, who lost his opener against fellow IM Darlo Nadera, drew with NM Ramon Lagrio in just 15 moves of English Opening.

In women's play, defending champion Catalan beat plant killer Jean Rivera in 50 moves of Caro-Kann to gain the sole lead with 2.0 points.

Rivera, who beat top-seed WIM Jennylyn Mendoza in the first round at 1.0.

WFM Camellia Blanco defeated WIM Camellia Alvarez in 41 moves of Ruy to take second spot with 1.5 points.

WFM Shania Joy Lourdes defeated with a draw against WFM Cristine Rose Marasigan in 37 moves of Dutch while WFM Kathryn Ann Cruz also halved the point with Mendoza. Marlon Bernardino Contributor

SPORTS

JOCKEY Arnnie Alcasid heads back to the stable on top of explosive British Cup winner Key Apo. PHOTO

30TH MARHO RACES

D'ansoy, Key Apo outkick rivals

By Edwin Villanueva, CONTRIBUTOR

LOCAL gallopers Dandansoy and classy import Key Apo topped their respective fields to share top billing in the Marho 30th Anniversary race-fest yesterday at the Santa Ana Park.

Flashing her patented late rush, Dandansoy captured the Smart-Mandaluyong Cup, while Key Apo, showing why he's the No. 1 import around, claimed the British Cup.

In the Cojuangco Cup featuring the founding stalwart-owners of Marho, Dandansoy put on a big kick down the stretch to nose back Onyx and win the 1,600-meter event by two lengths.

The five-year-old bay mare owned by Mandaluyong Rep. Benhur Abalos logged P600,000 under the guidance of Dominador "Nagsi Pao" Borbe Jr., while Onyx, Rajamvir Dass, ridden by Pat Dilema, netted the P225,000.

"Medyo sa dyaga DPI, patience pati sa[?]," gushed Borbe, who took over the reins from Jonathan Hernandez.

Dandansoy, timed by Lionhearted, one of Pass in the Neck and bred by Marho chair Sandy Javier, clocked 1:39.8 (22.3-22.3-24.3-27). Bang Time arrived fourth, followed by Getting Edgy, Star Laurel, copyright Pass Bound, Jealous and Jurassic.

Onyx, who won the Pfaff-Mile two weeks ago, entered the stretch as expected and appeared headed for a wire-to-wire romp until Dandansoy peeled off from a tight fourth at the top of the stretch and unloaded a soaring rally.

In the British Cup, also disputed over the mile, Key Apo, trained by Marho chief Antonio "Pancho" Poyon, bucked an early pressure by Crystal Shine then sprinted a full by Pearl Skew to the stretch to prevail by two lengths.

The Alberto Stables-trained Key Apo, a five-year-old bay colt sired by Periapitos out of Affaire and winner of the opening leg of the Inspirer Stakes Series, pocketed P250,000. He clocked 1:40.4hd (23-.20.5-.24.5-.28).

"Mura kung may kalaban [sa Crystal Shine Kayo] di ko maspeare (I know Crystal Shine will apply early pressure so I just lolled my mare)," said Key Apo's jockey Antonio Alcasid Jr.

Earlier, Equestre's Dalahaitis ruled the Emzee Pedro Cojuangco Cup, one of the special races honoring the 75 founders of Marho.

"It's been a successful staging of Marho's 30th anniversary. Thank you very much to all those who supported us like Emzee, the Philkoreans and the legacy horses," said Poyon.

KEY Apo owner Punch Poyon takes his place at the podium.

KEY Apo (left) makes his move in the homestretch as beat Crystal Shine (right) and Pearl Skew. PHOTO

ics rental service

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2004 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER B1

BUSINESS

EIKI BRAIN

RP risks new credit-rating downgrade

By Michelle V Rama

THE HAGUE—Several top Filipinos has warned that the country risks another credit-rating downgrade if the government fails to implement any of its proposed revenue-enhancement measures this year, saying the international capital market was closely watching how the Philippines will weather its fiscal woes.

"We cannot underestimate the concern of investors on the government's need to implement its fiscal reform measures. We could be courting a downgrade if nothing happens within the year," said Cesi Guidote, executive director of the BSP's Treasury Relations Office.

Guidote said foreign investors were expected to raise questions on the progress of the Arroyo administration's proposed fiscal measures, and on their chances of getting legislated by Congress, when they meet with the country's economic officials for a two-week roadshow that will start on Wednesday.

The roadshow, which will be led by the Department of Finance, will be participated in by Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong, BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura, BSP Deputy Governor Armando Ferrazzini Jr., and Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima. The economic officials will hold representations from credit-rating agencies, bond investors and foreign direct investors on the state of the Philippine economy, especially the health of the fiscal sector.

The roadshow, whose objective is to ease worldwide of the jumpy national capital market in the Philippines amid talks of the country's fiscal problems, will begin in Hong Kong and continue to Singapore, London, New York, and ends in Washington.

Guidote said Congress needed to pass at least one revenue measure this year to prove to the international credit and investment community that the country was capable of meeting a looming fiscal crisis.

Since the cash-strapped government is expected to shoulder bigger expenditures in the coming years, especially because of its investment to absorb the P600 billion worth of debts of state-owned National Power Corp., investors would naturally watch whether it could come up with new revenue measures, Guidote explained.

The Arroyo administration is pushing for the legislation of eight revenue-enhancement measures. These are the rationalization of fiscal incentives, the imposition of inflation of excise taxes on cigarettes and alcohol, a two-step increase in the value-added tax, a 70 increase in the excise tax on petroleum, the shift from net to gross income tax, a tax amnesty, the implementation of a performance-based attrition system for government operators, and the imposition of a franchise tax on telecommunications companies.

If all these measures are passed, the government expects to garner as a combined P90 billion in additional revenues come. These are intended to help address the national government's rhetoric with target of wiping out its budget deficit, which stood at P169.2 billion last year, and to gradually reduce its ballooning debt, which has already reached more than P3 trillion.

Analysts said that if Congress failed to pass at least one revenue-enhancement measure before the end of the year, the country could have its credit ratings downgraded by a notch.

The country's current credit ratings from Standard & Poor's and Fitch Ratings both stand at BB (stable outlook), while the credit

SEE PAGES B3

PAL aims for 99% on-time performance

By Charissa S. Batino

NO more "Please Always Late" tag for flag carrier Philippine Airlines.

PAL president Jaime Bautista said the airline would like to initially improve to on-time performance to 90 percent for overseas flights and 95 percent for domestic runs starting this year.

Eventually, the airline concluded by regaining Carrier but would like to hit a 99 percent on-time performance.

The flag carrier's current on-time performance is slightly below the standard of 85 percent on overseas flights and 90 percent on local flights. Statistics showed that PAL had been rating poorly in this area compared to its closest rival, Cebu Air (5J).

Cebuanapacific started Cebu Pacific claims to have an on-time performance of 90 percent.

"Our on-time performance is very close to the airline standard of 85 percent for international and 90 percent for domestic. We acknowledge that we should achieve more than this to further meet the expectations of our passengers," Bautista pointed out.

It's a bid to help solve the problem, PAL had started reducing the turnaround time in the province from one hour to between 20 and 45 minutes so the planes could come back earlier to Manila for the service checks and maintenance.

PAL is also reviewing flight schedules to improve the use of its planes. The 2G chief said the company wanted to use each aircraft for more than seven hours a day.

"If we do this, there is a lot we change in generate more revenue," he said.

Bautista said that

The quick brown fox

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MB delays banks' shift to new rules

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE MONETARY Board has moved the deadline for banks to comply with stricter accounting rules, from early next year to become June 2005 and June 2006.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas officer-in-charge Alberto Reyes said the policy-making body agreed during its meeting last week to move the deadline, as most banks would not be able to switch to the International Accounting Standards by Jan. 1.

"The banks will not be able to comply because there will be a major impact on the acquisition of infrastructure, major changes to be done in IT (information technology) software and it will take time for banks to adjust," Reyes told reporters.

The board specifically referred to IAS provisions 30, 32 and 39.

IAS 30 prescribes stricter disclosure standards on items such as off-balance sheet items, maturity of assets and liabilities, concentrations of assets, liabilities and off-balance sheet items, losses on loans and advances, general banking risks and assets pledged as security.

On the other hand, IAS 32 requires a broad range of disclosures about financial instruments, including information as to their fair values.

IAS 32 works hand in hand with IAS 39, which is now dealt with the recognition and measurement of financial assets and liabilities, including derivatives (as an interest in a subsidiary, associate, or joint venture).

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Overcoming SME hurdles

No Free Lunch

Carlito P. Mallari

MOST don't we have enough true small and medium enterprises (SMEs)—those with 10-199 workers or P5-P100 million in assets—but have instead a preponderance of micro-enterprises? In most discussions with those in the know, four important constraints stand out, namely: (1) financing, (2) access to technology, (3) availability of raw materials, and (4) access to markets.

Money is there, but...

Financing has consistently emerged as the most limiting constraint to the growth of SMEs in the country. It is not so much a lack of funds potentially available for SME lending, it is, rather, the difficulty of access to these funds. Theoretically, there should be enough funds for SME financing. The law now even requires banks to allocate 6 percent of their loan portfolios to SMEs, while government financial institutions have their own special SME windows. Still, private banks can't cite any worthy examples of how they have met the SME's borrowing needs, preferring to dealing with a larger number of smaller accounts. There is also the perception that SMEs are greater credit risks than their larger counterparts, a premise that is actually questionable in light of experience in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis. Many SMEs are also unable to access bank funds for a variety of reasons, including limited track record, lack of acceptable collateral, and inadequate financial statements and business plans.

If one looks at BSP records, it would appear that banks are generally complying with the six mandatory lending to SMEs. In truth, much of these funds do not actually go to SMEs as some large firms deliberately underestimate their assets (e.g. in trade taxes), thereby getting reclassified as medium scale. Besides, banks can submit to other qualified investments in compliance with the law.

Start-up SMEs require long-term funds to match the long-gestating nature of their businesses, but financial institutions rarely offer such long-term loans. What the sector needs are venture capital and equity funds, which few are again willing to go into.

Meanwhile, much of the special lending programs supported by government and donor agencies are doomed more to feed-based and micro-enterprise projects, not to true SMEs. We have already argued before why these types of enterprises, of which we have no many (92 percent of all enterprises), cannot be relied upon to provide the quality jobs that would keep our workers here at home.

Inferior technology

Most SMEs in the country are held back by low level of technology, with production methods that are generally not very efficient, even wasteful. The result is inconsistent product quality and short processes, rendering them uncompetitive. Product quality problems and inadequate raw materials could be better addressed if more firms follow certified methods and undergo performance or quality tests. However, we lack common support facilities like testing centers and standardization agencies, whether government or private, owned/operated, "do-jobs" (and consume materials and) development (R&D) facilities, inasmuch as individual SMEs cannot afford to undertake their own R&D in house.

While internationally recognized quality management systems standards are available (e.g. the ISO 9000 series), our SMEs prefer to rely on their own homegrown quality systems. The high cost and the high degree of formalization and documentation required by the recognized systems put them beyond touch of most SMEs. But this also largely shuts them out of the export markets.

Availability of inputs

SMEs often find it difficult or expensive to access raw materials and inputs. First, there is the general problem of sourcing and transporting some materials due to inadequate infrastructure and communications facilities. Second, government policies often make inputs more expensive for SMEs. Import tariff policies make the cost of key raw materials and intermediate inputs. In the food business, for example, sugar is made much more expensive by the very high level of trade protection enjoyed by the sugar industry. Similarly, packaging materials are made more expensive by government protection on petrochemicals and plastics. Third, there is sometimes a seasonality and instability of supply of raw materials because SMEs like domestic household or backyard suppliers. In the food processing sector, for example, the type of banana (saba) used in making ampalaya chips comes from backyard farmers. Similarly, the instability of local meat supplies hinders the food processors to advocate for liberalized importation of meat.

Access to markets

Coming in the way of SMEs' access to markets is inferior transport and communication infrastructure. They also have limited access to market information, especially internet-based information. Some out of limited access to ICT in general. A key impediment is our SMEs' gaining a foothold in export markets is their inability to respond to volumes demands due to lack of effective SME organizations. The problem is also a related one: Filipinos are said to be too individualistic and too reluctant to pool together with competitors when volume demands from abroad require it. As a result, we have been losing too many opportunities to our neighbors.

Having outlined SME sector is widely agreed to be a key goal to most pursue. But the road to get there is a long and winding one.

Comments welcome at cbalmi@hotmail.com

A MESSAGE TO CONSUMERS FROM SONIC STEEL INDUSTRIES

THIS IS TO INFORM THE PUBLIC THAT U.S. PATENT NO. 3,343,930 ISSUED ON SEPTEMBER 26, 1967 ENTITLED "FERROUS METAL ARTICLE COATED WITH AN ALUMINUM ZINC ALLOY" AND U.S. PATENT NO. 3,393,089 ISSUED ON JULY 16, 1968 ENTITLED "METHOD OF FORMING IMPROVED ZINC-ALUMINUM COATING ON FERROUS SURFACES" HAVE LONG BECOME PART OF THE PUBLIC DOMAIN, THESE PATENTS HAVING EXPIRED A LONG TIME AGO.

EPIFANIO M. EVASCO, DIRECTOR OF PATENTS, IN A LETTER DATED JULY 20, 2004 TO SONIC STEEL INDUSTRIES VICE PRESIDENT FOR CORPORATE AFFAIRS BIENVENIDO L. DULCE JR, CERTIFIED THAT THESE PATENTS "ARE ALREADY IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN AND ANYONE CAN USE THE SAID INVENTIONS WITHOUT FEAR OF INFRINGEMENT UNDER THE IP (INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY) CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES."

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PAL aims for 99% ...

Previous Page B3

PAL would always start the day with on-time flights. A delayed flight in the middle of the day would start a domino effect of delays.

"What we are doing is to have the planes back in Manila as soon as possible and to spend less time on the ground in the provinces. The planes have to be in Manila by noon so that is where the checks and maintenance are being done. We don't leave that to the provinces," he explained.

He said PAL was now focusing on improving service to customers, increasing productivity and cutting down costs.

"We owe it to our customers to improve our service. Customer service is now the priority of PAL and we are talking about real as-real, from ordering to delivering the passengers and cargo to their destinations," Bautista said.

But to improve efficiency, Bautista said PAL must first get out of rehabilitation as it would have more flexibility to improve its operations.

PAL had said that its rehabilitation plan allows it to get out of rehabilitation the year not even considers borrowing funds for expansion. The company's 10-year rehabilitation started in 1999.

But a violent strike was forced to go into rehabilitation in 1999 following crippling labor problems and a failure to settle debts totaling $1.2 billion. The rehabilitation called for $200 million in fresh equity provided by the.

Like any company under rehabilitation, the flag carrier has to undergo strict austerity measures and every material decision like the purchase of new airplanes or flying to new routes have to be approved by creditors.

The 47-year-old business was started president of PAL last Aug. 20, he replaced Avelino Zapanta who had retired.

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Target: PriceSmart

THE FORMER No. 2 man of PriceSmart, with the financial backing of local investors, is opening a bigger and cheaper warehouse club designed to challenge his former employer.

American expatriate Randy Labrecque, together with Cuyos franchisee Virnar Manuel, Edmund Thebeau (son of incumbent executive Armando Thebeau), and Cebu candies factory owner Eric Uy, is opening the Cost-U-Less warehouse club in Cebu metropolis in November.

Though modestly named, the local Cost-U-Less, according to the grapevine, is independent of the Washington-based chain but would nevertheless mimic the bulk of its US grandfather the Sunday limited company.

Labrecque, who is married to a Cebuana, resigned from PriceSmart early this year after a falling out with country manager Benjamin Woods.

Unlike PriceSmart, Cost-U-Less is a true membership club, meaning the store will be open to the general public despite its US warehouse-deli-car intention. Moreover, the Cebu Cost-U-Less will be more than twice as big as PriceSmart, occupying two hectares whose property is being leased from Seprodito Ulloa.

According to the grapevine, 19 officers and personnel have already left PriceSmart to join Labrecque, a reputed merchandising expert, in his new venture.

It is not immediately clear if Llanos, another marketing wizard, would leave day-to-day functions in the warehouse store; his last-minded August coups d'etat were parked (see office memo in front of the Prudential Guarantee building in Legaspi Village).

But that is another story.

Chaco détente

WRAITHS Lucio Co and William Tieng have struck up a modus vivendi, this we have on good authority, to stop the homicidal warfare now threatening to engulf the two big importers.

Co is said to be the silent principal of the new chocolate monopoly supplier of the country's dairy free drops, whose previous supply contract had been held for years by Tieng and (check) of other smaller importers.

According to the grapevine, Tieng went to see Co last week to conclude with the details of his exodus.

There at the scene, the two latter competitors, who reportedly started out as friends, struck up an acrimonious row over the point bearings being called for by their congressional allies would (no longer be pursued).

Said speaking of Co, the Pamfield superstar has departments store chain-cum-bare-repossessed his majority stake in Sumpra Street and Country Club in Hongkongers Jack Lam.

Lam, said to be the real enemy of Fun Ilocandia as well, plans to follow the successful turnaround strategy of the Chinese horse owner to revive the moribund Club room.

Dandleg's 'son-in-law'

FORMER Ayala lawyer Leo Palma, the "son-in-law" of Sun Miguel chief Edwardo Cuisumano Jr. who was disbarred last week by the Supreme Court upon Dandleg's petition, is reportedly a deputy director of the Advisory Centre on WTO Law in Geneva.

Interestingly where he and his "wife" relocated to escape the vessels of Dandleg after their scrupulous marriage in Hong Kong in 1981.

Up to the early Cory years, Palma and his "wife", Ms. Lolita Cuisumano, Dandleg's fourth child and youngest, had been opposing the move of the Cuisumano parents to have their marriage annulled.

To their relief (check) records for first-time business, Palma was, it turned out, a very much married man when he exchanged "I dos" with the Cuisumano daughter in the Crown Colony.

To rub salt into the wound, Palma's airline ticket and per diem had been on account of Dandleg, the lawyer supposedly wrapping very tactic in Hong Kong on his way to Australia for a Dandleg assignment.

Despite Cuisumano's ties with Marcos and then President Estrada, Palma remained up to 2000 employed as legal attaché of the Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the World Trade Organization in Geneva, before moving over to the WTO proper.

According to the grapevine, the brilliant JP lawyer owed his Geneva stint and, possibly, his continuing good health, on the sponsorship of Tia Rizo Ople.

Incidentally, Jo Cuisumano girl, who has a grown-up daughter in Geneva as a result of the Palma episode, is now back in the Philippines and married—very much legally—to a cardiologist; the latter union is blessed with a set of twins, much to the delight of the grandparents.

Heard through the grapevine

GUGGENHEIMER insurance magnate Ruben Carpio Jr. and Lucio Tan-ally Mauricio Jr., erstwhile steadfast buddies, have been stroking each other for months on Cayuse one-upmanship at the Manila Golf Club only on (mis)driver when his former tormitor, who has made the club his second office during weekdays, is not around.

(E-mail: mcbtan_jobs@inq.com or cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com)

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

Add'l tax on used vehicle imports pushed

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE GOVERNMENT is looking at putting an additional specific duty of P500,000 on used vehicle imports as import-ranking duties and taxes.

Used imports coming from outside Southeast Asia are currently slapped a 30-percent duty, an excise tax ranging from 3 to 60 percent depending on the engine power, and a 12-percent value-added tax imposed on the landed cost.

A proposed measure to order that imposes an additional duty is being considered mainly to address the environmental issues resulting from the proliferation of imported used vehicles.

The imposition of the additional duty is likened to the practice in Australia, where imported used vehicles are slapped a surcharge of A$12,000 a unit.

The proposal has been taken up in a review meeting of the Cabinet-level economic and social development.

Trade Undersecretary Dawn C. Herbosa said in an interview such imports have normally reached "end-of-life" status in their countries of origin.

Herbosa said when vehicle models reach this point, manufacturers stop making replacement parts and components—and the vehicles become useless.

"When these are imported into the country, we become a dumping ground of other country's trash," he said.

The official added that in other countries, when owners shell out money just to get their old vehicles garaged, On the other hand, they get great incentives if they could find offshore destinations for their used vehicles.

PLANTERSBANK, AUREOS CAPITAL

$20-M fund for local SMEs readied

By Doris C. Dumlao

Global fund manager Aureos Capital Ltd. and Planters Development Bank are pooling a $20-million private equity fund for small and medium enterprises in the Philippines as part of a $70-million regional fund for Southeast Asia.

In an interview, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Officer-in-Charge Alberto Reyes said local lender Planters Bank would contribute $6 million or about 25 percent of the Philippine allocation.

"As presented by Planters Bank, this shall be the first private equity fund of its kind in the Philippines which can be a source of long term funds needed by the local banks...as he called Planters Bank Aureos Fund—in its meeting last Thursday.

He said this would be part of the regional fund called Aureos Southeast Asia Fund Ltd.

Aureos Capital is an international manager of private equity funds, a market leading risk capital investor in emerging markets with more than $300 million of committed capital. It has found a close cut-market niche in SMEs.

The fund has invested in more than 140 companies, with 89 exits achieved as of end-2005. The investments extend across Africa, Central America, Pacific Islands and South Asia. It is owned by institutional investors Commonwealth Development Corp. and Swedfund.

It will be the first time that the global fund is investing in Southeast Asia, although it has existing offices in two markets in the region...the Philippines and Thailand.

For its part, Planters Bank, majority owned and managed by the Tambunting family, is the country's biggest private development bank with a total consolidated assets of P50 billion, capital of P2.9 billion and network of 76 branches.

The bank has specialized in SME lending over the last 10 years and is a consistent recipient of awards and citations from the country's founding and government agencies for SMEs. It is among the top 250 corporations in the Philippines.

The World Bank's International Finance Corp., the Netherlands' Development Finance Co. and Asian Development Bank represent a combined ownership of more than 40 percent in Planters Bank.

SEC approves iBank IPO

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission (SEC) approved the planned initial public offering of International Exchange Bank (iBank), which is targeting to list its shares this December.

The bank's maiden offering will hopefully be the first IPO for the stock market this year.

iBank will offer 8.35 million shares representing roughly 25 percent of the bank's 33.35 million outstanding shares. The offer price is estimated at P175 a share.

Of this, 5.34 million common shares are primary or new shares. The bank also granted an over-allotment option to its issue manager and underwriter to buy up to 2.5 million common shares coming from the 8.35 million shares offered.

The bank expects to raise gross proceeds of P1.5 billion with the additional allotment. Without it, it will raise P918.3 million. Net proceeds will amount to P845.7 million after offer expenses are deducted.

After the public offering, major shareholders will be also diluted. These are JOSE Equities, whose holdings will be reduced to 25.6 percent from 33.5 percent; holding firm Bloomgate's stake will be cut to 17.2 percent from 22.89 percent; Ramon Isidro will get diluted to 10.3 percent from 20 percent; Grandslife Properties to 8.2 percent from 11.3 percent, and Philippine Realty & Holdings Corp. to 8.6 percent from 10.4 percent.

iBank managed to grow its earnings to P825 million last year from P282 million on lower provisions for possible losses. As of the first quarter, its net profit stood at P171 million.

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Profit-taking seen to continue

From page B1

dere at Eagle Equities Inc.

Most analysts said the stock market was bound to head south after gaining for nine straight days.

"For most of us, the technical correction has been overdue and the resignation of a key government official was used as an excuse to cash in on gains," Jerie Patag of AB Capital Securities said.

For the week, the Philippine Stock Exchange composite index shed 73 points or 4 percent to close at 1,661.35.

Patag said traders were on the lookout for a reason to take profits and found one in the resignation of National Treasurer Mita Figueroa last week, a key official in the former administration's economic team.

But this was a "temporary setback," according to fund managers.

Sources in Ore Trust head of investment and senior assistant vice president Princess C. Herrera in said the resignation of Figueroa had caused initial jitters among currency investors since it was unexpected.

But the fall in the stock market was hardly limited to the resignation.

"The market's fall is not attached to the resignation. The market has been going up a week now and it has reached all-time highs. It has been overbought and a already due for a correction," Mendoza said.

A local fund manager said that while the resignation came at a time when the government was struggling to plug its gaping budget deficit, what was more important was that policies were maintained. The comment followed reports that the resignation of Figueroa was triggered by policy differences with other Finance officials over the government's bid to woo investors.

"If there are differences, we can't afford to have those disagreements. One may or the other, it takes out the uncertainty," the local fund manager said.

Vitarte said that this week, investors will look at the meetings of the US Federal Reserve where its policy makers may raise federal funds rate by a quarter of a percentage point or 1.75 percent.

"Beyond the expected rate adjustment, we don't expect the Fed to adopt a more aggressive policy on rates as long as US inflation remains in check," Vitarte said.

"We expect light trading ahead after almost a month of decent gains. The market has become too overbought after the rallies of the past two weeks that we need to let some air out. It also provides a lot of room for value-hunters to take a peek on less than encouraging news. Although the market's bullish trend appears to remain intact even after the correction, we still don't have a clear picture of when the bulls will come back," Vitarte added.

AB Trade observed that selling was across the board, led by phone giant Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., and Globe Telecom. Other stocks that were also sold down included Ayala Corp., Ayala Land, SM Prime Holdings, Manila Electric Co., First Philippine Holdings, Vistamalls Inc. Rlgrail, and Banko Silverlands, Philippine National Bank and Filsyndicate PCI.

"The market is likely to continue with the sideways movement as it is now in consolidation mode. Telecom stocks PLDT and Globe remain hot the second to the one composite, continue to suffer from profit-taking in the absence of new developments ... or sentiment may start to appear once we near the end of the third quarter on expectations of strong earnings for the period," SPI said. Elizabeth L. Sanchez

RP may again tap international capital market

By Michelle V. Rivera

[DEBUT] In heavy debt burden, the Philippines may yet again tap the international capital market as economic officials go off on a non-stop roadshow that will begin Wednesday.

According to Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong, who will lead other delegates to the roadshow, the government welcomes the idea of again borrowing from international bond investors if market prices will be attractive.

"Our policy has always been to do opportunistic borrowing. If the price is good, then we will borrow," Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong said in an exclusive interview with reporters.

The Department of Finance stressed, however, that their team are firm decision to make another bond issue.

During the roadshow, the country's top economic officials will brief international bond investors, foreign direct investors and representatives from credit rating agencies on the country's economy with particular focus on the fiscal sector.

With focus focusing, the roadshow will be participated in by BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura, NEP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr., and Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima.

It will kick off in Hong Kong and will continue on to Singapore, London, New York, and end in Washington.

While the roadshow is a regular event for economic officials, it is expected to focus this time on convincing the international capital market to keep their confidence on the Philippines amid talks of the country's fiscal problems.

FREE

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Q-NOTE SERIES

DOF rejects Congress bid to remove automatic debt allocation in budget

By Michelle V. Rivera

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance has rejected outright the proposal by Congress to remove the government's automatic budget allocation for debt servicing, saying that the proposal will not ease the country's fiscal woes.

The DOF said the automatic appropriation for debt payments ensured budget in annual budget it as important said that keeps the investment credit sustainably confident that the country will pay its loans.

"It's up to them (legislators) if they want the country to sink," said Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong during an interview.

Sen. Ilocos Defender Santiago is pushing for the removal of the automatic budget appropriation for debt servicing. During the Senate budget hearing last week, Santiago said that debt payment should not be automatic, but should instead pass the scrutiny of Congress.

The senator also noted the proposal to offset the record that a huge part of the budget allocated for debt servicing were only used to bail out government-owned and -controlled corporations from their huge liabilities.

GOCCs, especially heavy losers like the National Power Corp., are being criticized for aggravating the country's financial problems because of their huge liabilities.

The proposal will only impair the national government's ability to access foreign capital markets for its own credit needs, the lone agencies explained.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin was quoted by news reports as saying that the DBM would not agree with Santiago's proposal because creditors would no longer lend to the Philippines if the proposed were to push through.

The country's public sector debt has now reached P5.9 trillion, almost half of which is accounted for by borrowings of state-owned companies.

The Senate earlier noted that while the government appears to have the biggest share of the debts, a substantial part of the borrowings was actually used to pay the billions of GOCCs.

The government's automatic budget allocation for debt servicing is mandated by Presidential Decree No. 117, about a third of the total budget is used to pay off government loans.

The national government has allocated for 2005 P501.7 billion for debt servicing. The original debt service proposal stood at P597.4 billion.

NTC wants extra powers to regulate media firms

THE NATIONAL Telecommunications Commission is asking Congress to grant it stronger police powers to regulate phone, media companies, while retaining a portion of the revenue the NTC collects yearly for its operations.

It also asked legislators to turn NTC into a bigger, better equipped organization to solve the problems of the sector as well as curb irregularities.

As of August, the NTC had collected about P520 million. By year-end, the amount collected should reach about P1.2 billion.

NTC chair Ronald Solis said the agency had started drafting a bill to turn the commission into a collegial body just like the Securities and Exchange Commission, composed of a chair and four commissioners.

Just like the SEC, the NTC is seeking fiscal autonomy for its officials for continuity of policies and to insulate the commissioners from political pressures.

"We are asking Congress for stronger powers, including police powers, to go after errants," said Solis. "We are working on a draft bill with Rep. Simeon Kimatan, a former NTC chair, to strengthen and reorganize the NTC."

The NTC was created by Executive Order 546. A bill is being prepared to strengthen the mandate of the Commission.

"The NTC wants natural independence so it could be allowed to use a portion of the revenue it generates," said Solis.

Solis said that currently, all collections of the NTC were remitted to the national treasury. Last year, the agency delivered P1.8 billion due to a windfall collection from past due accounts.

This year, he said the NTC should collect between a billion pesos to P1.2 billion.

"We shall be following up with the telcos with large overdue obligations," said Solis.

The NTC is pursuing the collection of P1.3 billion in spectrum regulatory fees from Pilipel from 1997 to September 2004. Smart Communications Inc., according to the NTC, also had to settle about P9.88 million in spectrum users fee.

The NTC had given all covered institutions until the end of the month to settle their regulatory fees. Gleriaa S. Bartiso

The deepening crisis

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. Generoso

THE PAPER, "The Deepening Crisis: The real score on deficits and the public debt," written by 21 professors of the University of the Philippines School of Economics, is not for Sunday leisure reading.

One has to grapple with highfalutin sentences such as, "A unilateralism with resolve, democratizable solidarity between both the leadership, and a membership of underdevelopment from the public, the effects of these measures should result in a palpable easing of the crisis atmosphere and a gradual return of investor confidence by late next year." I have always considered why PhDs write that way.

But, when you cut through the verbiage, the paper draws a clear road map on how to cut the P390-billion deficit by P150 billion, and how deficits can be avoided in the future without further legislation.

The paper proposes that the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) should be cut to the 38 percent minimum prescribed by law. Why should the local government officials complain? They will still have a lot of money to spend.

The pork barrel will be cut, not wiped out. Each senator will have to make do with P150 million, each congressman with P30 million. That is still a lot of money to play around with.

New taxes are proposed. Tax exemptions will be eliminated. All these will bring in additional revenue of about P100 billion, the paper says. But the late President Ramos raised more than that during his watch.

"Having drawn the road map for getting out of the fiscal hole, the paper stops. The IMT should have gone one step further and specified the tipping point. For years, the banks have said that the government's heavy borrowings have been the cause of the high net interest rates in this part of the economy. If the deficit is cut as suggested in the paper, the government will borrow P150 billion less from the banks. This should bring down interest rates. As a result, the additional taxes will be paid by the taxpayers out of their savings in lower interest payments. As interest rates go down, so will consumer prices. By cutting the deficit thus, everybody, especially the Filipino consumer, wins. This is the point that the paper missed.

But, will interest rates really go down? See if the banking cartel can help it. The banking cartel will crack the whip on their members to keep interest rates high. The Bangko Sentral governor should stop being a commercial banker and start acting like a central banker.

And even if interest rates do go down, will consumer prices drop? See if the various cartels—cement, chicken, pork, beef, sugar, rice, the list is endless—can help it. The cartels will say to keep prices from dropping. That is what cartels are for. Those so-called prices are confounding government officials should stop cooperating with these cartels. The role of government on prices is to provide a free and open market where buyers and sellers fight for mutually agreed prices.

To heighten competition, the local market should be opened to foreigners. Before the deregulation of the insurance industry, before the deregulation of the oil industry, before the telecommunications revolution to high heaven, let us look at what has happened to the fire insurance industry. For decades, the price of a fire insurance policy was dictated by a cartel. This was the only cartel in our history that had government license. Not only that, the Insurance Commission was the enforcer of the cartel's prices. Ten years ago, in line with the Asean free trade agreements, the government threw open the doors to foreign insurance companies. Today, fire insurance rates are about one fourth what they were ten years ago. Yet, fire insurance remains a profitable business. And, as a whole, the insurance industry continues to pay its share—and big a share, if you ask me—in taxes.

My suggestion to the DTI is this: whatever studies you undertake, check if the Filipino consumer, first and last.

ADVERTISING 'MADNESS'

With the deficit chasing off disposable incomes to the near future, large billboards for brand labels may seem frivolous. But it seems no crisis can put a good brand down, especially when the product can be found in "ongang" (bargain-hunter) shops, as advertised beneath this billboard of a high-end brand near Buendia-Pasay in Baguio. "Ongang" stores sell the same brands, accordingly not to be sure. —Edwin Cuerpo

ERC condones loans of 5 more power coops

By Abigail L. Ho

THE ENERGY Regulatory Commission recently approved the application of five more electric cooperatives (ECs) to have their loans condoned, a move seen to result in passing on reduction of as much as P1.91 per kilowatt hour (kWh) to affected areas.

Because of the loan condonation approval, customers of the Bataan Electric Cooperative, Inc. will be able to enjoy savings of P1.39 per kWh, as soon as the power distributor receives the official copy of the ERC order.

The other power cooperatives whose loans have been condoned are: Zambaanga del Norte Electric Cooperative, whose consumers may expect monthly rates to be reduced by 17.23 centavos per kWh; Zamboanga del Sur I Electric Cooperative, with rates reduced by 14.37 centavos per kWh; Cebu II Electric Cooperative with rates reduced by 13.91 centavos per kWh and Dumbaugan City Electric Cooperative with rates reduced by 1.78 centavos per kWh.

These newly issued loan condonation approvals brought to 40 the total number of final orders that the ERC had issued, this regulatory body said in a statement Friday.

The ERC is currently reviewing 18 more loan condonation requests. While doing so, it also hoped to receive from the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. the remaining 17 loan condonation applications that need to go through finalization.

The ERC was completing the loan condonation process with utmost urgency as we realize that consumer members of ECs stand to benefit from the loan reprieve," ERC Chair Rodolfo Albano Jr. said.

CA rules against SEC in Baguio Country Club case

THE COURT of Appeals has limited the Securities and Exchange Commission's petition to reconsider the SEC decision to nullify the corporate watchdog's decision against Baguio Country Club.

This gives the SEC no other recourse but to go to the Supreme Court. The CA's Special 15th Division, in a three-page resolution dated Sept. 1, reiterated its findings that the majority raised against the club "does not call for SEC's power of regulation and supervision," but is either "a function political in nature, which the SEC can no longer perform."

The appellate court stood firm in its decision dated March 26, 2004 that "the SEC has exceeded its jurisdiction" in the BCC case and revoked the SEC's series of orders against the Club.

The appellate court decision was composed of Justices Bienvenido Reyes, Elvi John Asuncion and Romilla Maravilla Contreras.

The case started when the brothers-in-law Ildefonso Bautista and Ramon Barrete sought the SEC's intervention in the inspection of corporate records and internal affairs, such as the issue of directors, the contract of its by-laws and the dividends in connection with stock-to-non-stock.

For its part, BCC claimed that the clubs' conversion to a non-profit, non-stock corporation would translate to substantial tax savings that would be passed back into its coffers, and could ongoing expansion and renovation.

From August to November of 2003, the SEC issued orders against club officials to enable regulatory officials to intervene in the conduct of the stockholders' meetings, to inspect corporate records and to participate during the validation of proxies.

In their petition at the CA, BCC cited grave abuse of discretion on the part of the SEC and its general counsel, Victoria Umali-Paca, when she issued orders against Club officials allegedly without jurisdiction, and with evident partiality. Doris C. Dumlao

52 airlines may land in Clark, says DOTC

THE ARROYO administration has given 52 airline companies landing rights on Clark International Airport to encourage carriers to consider using the former U.S. air base.

"We have granted landing rights to 52 airlines," said Transport Secretary Leandro Mendoza. The airlines, he said, have indicated that actual movement would be subject to air talks facilitated by the OAS (Civil Aeronautics Board)."

Airlines may only start landing in Clark once the country allows additional flights to the Philippines, or when carriers swap some of their operations in Clark from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

Granting landing rights to carriers, according to Alfonso Cusi, general manager of the Manila International Airport Authority, would spur the development of the North Luzon airport facility.

Once operational, Clark Airport aims to attract low-cost airlines carrying tourists and businessmen to the area," Cusi added. "It will also open the airport to and from the Middle East, carrying overseas Filipino workers from Central and Northern Luzon, and the Cordillera Autonomous Region."

Carriers were reluctant to use Clark airport because of its location. Clark also had not put essential infrastructure to make operations easier for airlines, like Manila's. The airport facility needed improvement and interconnection with Manila international reach to be desired.

Only Korean carrier Asiana airlines flies to and from Clark (but not to and from Manila). Others:

"By November, we're going to open the MNTC (North Expressway)," Mendoza said. "We've already started the construction of the North Rail and complete this in 2 to 3 years, or just in time for the Olympics in Athens," he added.

The government had committed to spend P2 billion to expand Clark airport.

According to Mendoza, they are also hoping to build airports in Pangdan, Bohol, Coron in Northern Palawan and San Fernando in La Union. Clarissa T. Batino

MB OKs stricter bank rules on governance

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE MONETARY Board of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has approved a circular that strengthens the banks' corporate governance.

"With the changes, we are more closely aligned with the corporate governance rules of the Securities and Exchange Commission," Alberto Reyes, BSP officer-in-charge, said in a statement.

The new guidelines include a requirement that the chair of a bank's audit committee must be an independent director or concurrent substantial equity interest in the bank.

While three members audit committee, at least two must be independent directors. Reyes said this requirement was even stricter than the SEC's, as the corporate watchdog requires only one independent director in the audit committees.

Reyes said the rules also mandate the creation of a risk management committee which shall govern the banks' risk management program.

He added the terms of reference of all the audit committees must be approved and cleared by the banks' boards of directors, for enhanced accountability.

While banning the accountancy firm of banks' external audit committees, the BSP is also seeking the creation of a regulatory body made up of external auditors to coordinate with global trends in the aftermath of the Enron scandal in the United States.

The BSP implements an accreditation system for external auditors of banks. However, Reyes said it might be necessary to put up a local regulatory body to govern all external auditors of the corporate sector, including banks, because that function would now be handled by the SEC alone.

RP risks new credit-rating downgrade

The Philippines has experienced a credit-rating downgrade in January this year, when Moody's Investor Service lowered its assessment of the country to a "negative outlook."

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LIFESTYLE

Editor Chelo Bautista-Formoso
Subsection Editor Lito B. Zulueta

Of plants and painters

ILLUSTRATION from "Flora de Filipinas"

The importance and beauty of Philippine flora have always been celebrated by scholars and artists

WHILE rounding in Batanes, I came across some plants I had never seen before. There was this lovely vine which looked a little like a cayoyo. There was pandan with prickly fruits, as well as a local version of datoc. Many of the plants in Batanes are found nowhere else.

Due to the province's unique botanical array and because of its rich cultural resources, the region has recently been declared a Strategic Agri-Fishery Development Zone. Wouldn't that be great?

ALL4ART

Rene Robles Jr.

Remarkable species

The fact that Batanes is so renowned with our botanical diversity further highlights the importance of our remarkable plants ecosystems. There are many species in the country that cause great excitement among plant lovers and scientists.

An example of this is the sailing-sailing (*Jasmine sambac* vine). A friend of mine explained to me that the sailing-sailing is an important breeding stock for many of the orchids of the world. Unfortunately, because its natural habitat in Mindanao is fast disappearing, it is actually facing extinction. On a side note, the sailing-sailing is so famous that, unlike other Philippine words, it is actually recognized by the spell check of many computers!)

The importance and beauty of Philippine flora have always been celebrated by scholars. One such scholar was Fr. Manuel Blanco.

According to Fr. Pedro Galbondo's account on this priest scholar, Blanco was born on Nov. 26, 1778, in the Spanish province of Extremadura and came to the archipelago as an Augustinian priest in 1803.

His fascination for our plants became a lifelong scientific direction. He was assigned to such towns as Angat in Bulacan, as well as Batangas, Bicutan and San José in Batangas. He also stayed in Mandaluyong. His last assignment was the monastery in Guadalupe, Cavite, to what is presently the infamous wallfe has chosen as hotel. He died in 1845.

Some books characterize the Spanish friars as ruthless and uncaring. In contrast, Blanco is said to have been "a man meticulous in the performance of his duties... He was a model priest, teacher and healer of souls."

He did much of his research in the forests of Bulacan and Batangas. He also established botanical study gardens in his numerous Augustinian monasteries on plants. Blanco was also attending to the needs of his parish. He is credited with the building of San José Church in Batangas, which still stands and is one of the most beautiful in the province today.

Galbondo notes that the first edition of Blanco's book ("Flora de Filipinas") was published in 1837. Other editions came out in 1845 and 1860. A recent edition was brought out by Fr. Galbondo in 1993.

Pocket parks

I hear that Fr. Blanco's Garden on the grounds of San Agustin Church has been revived. I don't you wish that more gardens were established in other towns to honor that man, who was so dedicated to our country?

These pocket parks could be tucked all across Intramuros, San José, Pandacan, etc., and filled with the kind of plants that the good friar studied. Such parks would not just be sanctuaries from the pressures of contemporary life, but could also be venues for scientific studies, with small exhibits and maybe even learning kiosks where young people can review ecological issues while becoming reacquainted with the joys of our plant world.

I hope that such gardens will be more than dreaming and not be to still and mentioned. There is a tendency to clean our public spaces with cement walls, cement pots, cement pavilions and cement benches. In the end, there is more concrete than plants in every mall.

In contrast, traditional Filipino gardens were usually very casual, comfortable affairs, with fruit trees, pavilion of hard wood, no lawns, easy-to-care-for but colorful plants like gumamelas and sampaguita.

An example of a wonderful old-fashioned garden is that of the 19th-century Villavieja House in Vigan, Batangas, now managed by my friend Baby Quilala and her family. It even has a winding path made of a kind of seamen gravel. There are no non-fanged plants. I think it is precisely when gardens are allowed to just be—to breathe, to unwind and grow with the wind, instead of being confined to corners and constantly trimmed—that they become such corners of the spirit.

One of the things that Fr. Blanco's book was famous for was its lavish illustrations. These beautiful plates of local plants were actually made by many well-known Philippine painters from that period. Ironically, the intricately illustrated pages became collectors' items. Many well-appointed homes would have the elegantly framed plates decorating their walls.

These paintings or plates of flora are sometimes referred to as botanicals. What is their attraction? Of course, a flower is always lovely to look at. Yet there is more to our attraction to plants. I think part of the explanation has to do with the sheer beauty of plant forms.

Exquisite proportion

My friend Boo Mendoza went to great lengths to make me understand that. Aside from the colors and the patterns of plants, there is also the indescribably satisfying sense of proportion. There is something so exquisitely just right about the relative sizes of the petals, of a cone, everything seems so random and yet so exact.

Actually, Boo says, this intrinsic beauty of things is discussed in books like "The Da Vinci Code" as the Fibonacci sequence. This has to do between the different parts of a plant or animal.

The Fibonacci concept helps explain why it

ON PAGE C2

SO WHAT COKE ARE YOU, REALLY?

Did you know that it's easy to tell someone's character by the things he or she likes? Take the quiz below and be surprised how much your taste tells a lot about who you are and, most of all, what Coke will most refresh you.

What would you wear on a big date?
A. A classy, all-black ensemble from top to toe
B. Whatever's loose and comfortable
C. Preppy silhouette that's consistently courtside
D. Body-hugging that will show your assets

Who are the artists on your CD rack?
A. Maroon 5, Alicia Keys
B. Hootenanny, Incubus
C. Eastbound Confidential
D. Ministry of Sound, Bizzo

What do you read?
A. Newspaper and novels
B. Independent titles
C. Comics and sci-fi
D. Magazines and self-help books

How do you like your steak?
A. Well-done
B. Rare
C. Medium-rare
D. I don't eat steak

What is your dream cell phone?
A. The less complicated, the better
B. Something that no one else has
C. With lots of games and software to operate
D. Streamlined, with lots of stylish covers

What's you dream car?
A. Anything that has four wheels and more
B. SUV
C. Beetle
D. Porsche

How will you pose in your yearbook photo?
A. Something that mommy would hang on the wall
B. Wacky and crazy, with tongue sticking out
C. You really don't care
D. Glamorous, almost like a magazine photo shoot

Now, the fun part. Below is an assessment of your personality profile. Find out which one you are based on your answers above. As a bonus, we've also written down which Coca-Cola beer describes and suits you. After all, there's nothing like guzzling a Coke that's refresh you the way you want it to.

Mostly A's
You're a classic. Everyone finds it easy to talk to you, and you get along well with almost everybody. You find it easy to get new friends, even in the most unlikely places.

Coke speak, you're like the Regular Coke. The one that everyone has always tried.

Mostly B's
You're on the wild side. You like to explore new places, and you love the outdoors. You find satisfaction in experimenting, and is happy knowing that there's always something different to do.

If you were a Coke, you'd be Cherry Coke. There's always a cherry with style in you!

Mostly C's
You've got a lot going for you: see you're just in just right. You always see the fun side of things. Easy-going and humorous, surely no party will do this same without you.

You're definitely a Vanilla Coke—you're a just the right touch of vanilla.

Mostly D's
You're also sophisticated. You always strive to improve yourself. You go to the gym, eat healthy food, because you know they're good for you. You're a class act, phenomenon!

Coke Light best suits you. It's the same Coke but with less than 1 calorie. It's good for you.

Twin bill of sensitive art

By Arnold Limcaco Dizon
Contributor

Aladin Antiqueño and Azor Pascoguin continue their explorations of everyday humanity in their forthcoming joint exhibit at Renaissance Art Gallery

"KARATIG sa Hanapbuhay," by Pascoguin

TWO sensitive and highly talented artists, Aladin Antiqueño and Azor Pascoguin, will launch a joint art exhibit on Sept. 24, 6:30 p.m., at the Renaissance Art Gallery, 4/L, Building A, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City. Honored guests will be Cecilia Balmeo Garrucho, Alden Castañeda and Alwin S. Sta. Rosa.

Antiqueño's paintings exude the simplicity, innocence, curiosity and playfulness of children. Watching the children at play after their school hours in his hometown in Buenos Cenis, reminds him of his own childhood, when he was painfully shy, deeply sensitive and elusive.

Antiqueño is the youngest of seven children. A Bachelor of Fine Arts graduate from the Philippine Women's University, Bulacan campus, he has won over 10 awards in local art competitions, including first prize in the Shell Mechanical Competition for Students. He held his first solo exhibit at the Bridge Gallery in 2000.

Sensitive renditions

As a child, he viewed the role of men as the protectors of women. But as Antiqueño grew older, he became less idealistic. Today, in his frustration, he paints what he feels the world should be.

In his painting "Salabay" he depicts the abstract feelings of optimism and fright of a young boy riveted piggyback by his reassuring and protective mom. In this realistic painting, Antiqueño shows two contrasting expressions and the abstract qualities of shielding a helpless victim with courage and love.

Antiqueño's paintings of children are extraordinary. The skin tones, the backyard setting of banana leaves, the Philippine sunlight, the extraordinary composition are elements that are rare to be ever looked.

In orchestrating his sensitive renditions, he emphasizes one's unseen links/bonds between mothers, daughters and sons.

There are elements qualities, too, for a realistic painter to ably express, a quite a feat in the same light, the viewer can easily identify with the metaphysical resonance expressed by the Antiqueño's paintings as, indeed, very lifelike.

"Sa Pilapil ako," by Antiqueño

Sacred process

When he first started out, Pascoguin thought of the simplest subject to paint—trees. He painted trunks that were in season, such as guavas, oranges, kalamansi and mangoes, painting each in oil on stretched canvas.

As he painted, the physical therapist-turned painter would analyze the textures of colors, the color tones, the texture of an orange rind in contrast with its soft, fine cottonlike fruit. He would mentally visualize his own sense of taste in "love" with the mind's eye whether the orange was sweet or sour.

As Pascoguin continued to paint the orange, he would also acquire his sense of touch, smell and taste. This enabled him to synchronize the pain brush he held, weaving it with the oil pigments, to love him and transforming the colors to the canvas.

The metamorphosis of an idea, the orchestration of one's senses, the projection of an artist's emotions onto the canvas and his handling of pigments—the creative process—are sacred moments for the artist.

When Pascoguin gained a certain amount of self-confidence, he advanced to painting landscapes with pastoral scenes with cows, chickens and domestic animals.

He moved on, finally, to painting human figures, more aware now of anatomical proportion, perspective and shading. He also learned to represent the illusion of advancing and receding colors, until he discovered the enthusiasm of water-filled Philippine sun.

Marion's pulse

Pascoguin has joined over 10 group exhibitions the last few years, including one in New York. He paints 8–12 hours daily.

He feels there is still so much to learn in the field of the visual arts. At present, he is focused on painting the many performing manual labor, such as men carrying heavy loads on their backs and women vendors selling wares along sidewalks.

He feels the energy and sweat of the laboring class, to deeply appreciate of the dignity of labor, and honors the great dexterity in the desirousness of wealth. Portraying the pulse and spirit of a person at hard labor, he hopes that future generations will appreciate and recognize what these men represent.

For the past four years, 40 artists and Pascoguin have actively participated in art workshops with their group of artists comprising Arnold Limcaco Dizon, Angelo Baldemora, Jomer Ignacio, Felipe Rhapsa, Tim Sanchez and Jessie Young.

The exhibit will run until Oct. 4 and will benefit the Philippine General Hospital Wheel for Adults. Call Renaissance Gallery at 6375318.

PR. MANUEL Blanco

Of plants and painters

From page C1

it is pleasant to contemplate the different compartments of a chambered nautilus. There is a rhythm to the way the compartments increase in size.

Presumably each time we admire ecclesiastical print on the wall, we are really mesmerized by the beauty of the perfect proportions of a plant, leaf, fruit or flower—which in turn are the reflections of the order of the universe.

One can also say that a flower painting introduces a bright, refreshing spot in even the most dreary room. In a way, people who cut to nurture little gardens in the agonies of our cities are like soldiers hurling against ugliness. Homage to all those women and men throughout the country who, even as I write this, are planting little beds in dry, abandoned lots or caring for flowers in a shady nook!

One such artist who has quite admirably carried out the tradition of botanical illustration is Cristina Cordova. Cristina is a native of Davao. Having first tried his hand at advertising, he finally found his calling in botanicals.

The many paintings are painstakingly drawn—delicate, yet full of the energy of creation. He has done many works for our family. He even created lovely murals for my parents' home in Antipolo.

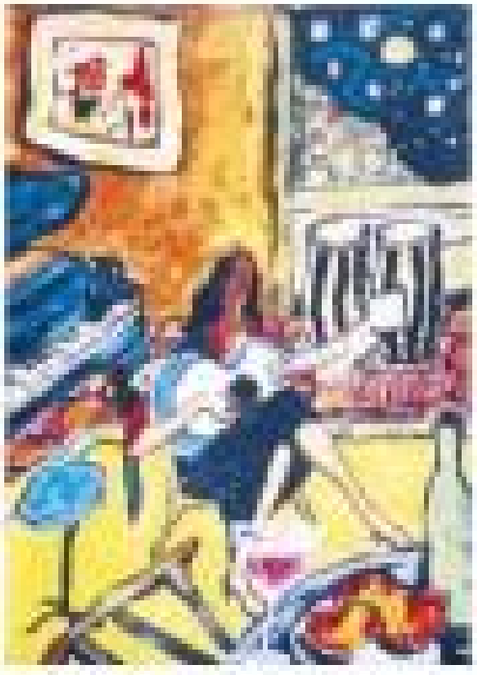
To achieve a high degree of accuracy, Cristina will patiently wait for a plant to be in season or to bear fruit...so that he can render its beauty in detail.

When you ask him why he has chosen his field of art, he sometimes points out that he is helping preserve our botanical heritage. Many of the plants he is painting are approaching extinction.

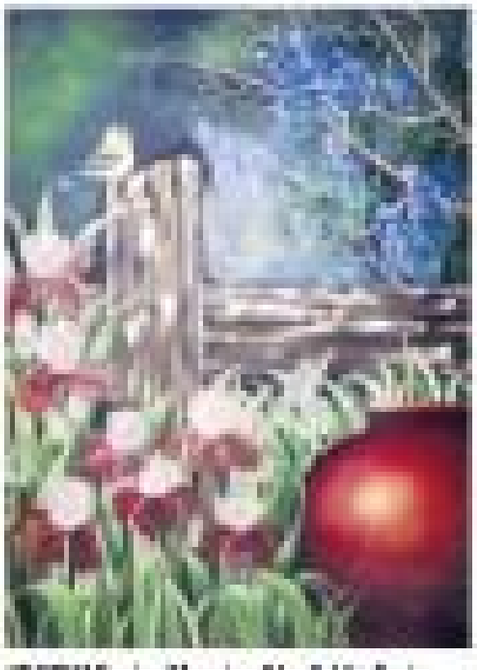
I suppose, in this way, Cristina is very much following in the footsteps of that great botanist and hero, Fr. Blanco, who had so selflessly documented our country's plant treasures.

For questions and comments, e-mail lizcruz@filipinahlibrary.org.ph or address letter to Filipiniana Heritage Library, Makati Ave., Ayala Triangle, Makati City.

Cukingnam at RCBC Plaza, Rocha at Nicotina Pavilion



"MEXICAN Serenade," by Carlos Rocha



"EARLY Spring Morning," by Addie Sycip Cukingnam

VISUAL ARTS

ADDIE Sycip Cukingnam is holding a solo exhibit, "Way si Addie sa Way Kapwa," tomorrow at the lobby of Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium at RCBC Plaza, Makati. Cukingnam will donate all the proceeds of her exhibit to Way Kapwa Kinh-tipuang Kulturalidad and Millennium Foundation. Call 885 KINI (5401158).

CARLOS Rocha unveils his exhibit "Life and Color" on Oct. 7-31 at Nicotina Exotica Pavilion, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City. The show features paintings and sculptures. Call 5211908 to 09.

DANTE Castillo captures fellow Filipinos' scenes and still life with a contrast of light and shadow in "Pure Light." The exhibit is ongoing until Sept. 30 at Gallery 108, 3/F, Bonifacio II, Ayala Center. 8184000.

HIRAYA Gallery presents Al Belarmino's "Odyssey" until Oct. 5 at 108 LM Ave., Ermita, Manila. The idyllic beauty which unites the lives of ethnic tribes is caught with nostalgia and angst in the masterstrokes of Belarmino, who visited the Marcobas of Kalamansig, Sultan Kudarat, for three years.

THE EMBARKING Room presents "Luah" on Sept. 29-Oct. 19 at the 6/F Metrobank Building, 1081 Metropolitan Ave., Makati. The exhibit features the new works of Noel Cabangon, Kiko Escoro, Alfred Cuyjuilla, Karen Flores, Tita Lim and Claire-lynne Uy. Their creations consist of oil on canvas, paper, plastic and collages. Call 8557877 8557886.

PETE Jimenez, advertising executive-turned-sculptor, presents "Wired," his sixth one-man show at the West Gallery in SM Megamall. The show runs until Oct. 5. West Gallery is at the Art Walk, 4/L, SM Megamall A, Mandaluyong City. Call 6341281.

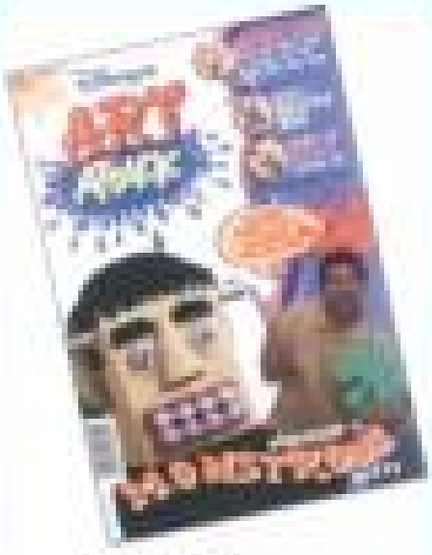
SALOMA de los Reyes mounts "Bahay Pinoy sa Kahoy" by Flank Gaso and Fred Lava, until Sept. 28 at the 3/F, Odette Center, 744 Gen. Luna St., Intramuros, Manila. The exhibit features the artists' recent works using Philippine hardwood in rendering Philippine scenes, genre figures and religious icons.

THE CULTURAL Center of the Philippines' Main Gallery features the most outstanding works of Pacita Abad until Oct. 31. The exhibit "Stories in My Mind" showcases the techniques of lithography, relief printing, screen printing and hand-colored paper pulp.

THE MUSEUM of De La Salle University-Manila presents "Moving 8/3" until Dec. 10. The exhibit is a showcase of artwork rendered in the expressionist tradition. It features the works of Botong Francisco, Bencab, Fernando Modesto, Solomon Saprid, Cesar Legaspi, Fernando Zobel, Roberto Chabet, Luis Lee Ben, Jose Joya, Anita Magsaysay-Ho, Fernando Olivanja and Manuel Rodriguez. Call 5219811.

HISTOR Michael Bello introduces his glow-in-the-dark art through a display at Ermita Antiques Gallery, located at the 3/F, Art Space, Glorietta 4. The artwork is dubbed "King Neptune's Bubbles," which features sea creatures encapsulated in bubbles.

SOME 200 Europeans and friends of Europe in the Philippines joined in art in celebration of Europe Day. The head of the delegation of the European Commission to the Philippines, Ambassador Jan de Kok and principally European ambassadors and consuls and Pia Rivera, a Filipino artist who studied independent Study in Art from the Institute d'Arte Lorenzo de' Medici in Florence, Italy, is putting their hand in prints using acrylic in varying colors to make up an artwork dubbed "United in Diversity—EU Enlargement—2004."



Art demo for kids

NATIONAL Book Store launches a new craft magazine called Disney's Art Attack, a take-off from the popular Disney Channel show with the same name.

For the mag's launch, parents with children who love arts and crafts are invited to a demonstration of fun craft activities for kids, where they can learn new and exciting ideas to stimulate their creativity.

The craft demonstrations will be held 1-5 p.m. on Sept. 25 in NBS-Glorietta, Oct. 3 in the Robinsons Galleria and Oct. 9 in the Quezon Avenue branch.

Meanwhile, NBS also introduces Chinese check-you cards by Hallmark called "Oriental Expressions."

Express yourself with the simplicity and elegance of the east, specifically through these cards that have Chinese designs such as gold Chinese characters embossed on a red cover. Inside are heartwarming messages meant to convey your gratitude for the recipient's thoughtfulness.

Available in all NBS outlets nationwide.

"St Fishhead, Patron Saint of Doomsday"

"Walleys of Beautiful People"

Far-out fantasia

By Constantino C. Tejero

Jason Moss is only in his 20s, but already he is holding his 11th one-man exhibit, this time of edgy neo-expressionist works

QUITE prolific, Jason Moss does innumerable book illustrations, editorial cartoons, comic strips and paintings through his young career.

He is only in his 20s but already he is holding his 11th one-man exhibit, "Head Stands," 15 pieces in watercolor and acrylic on paper, until Sept. 27 in Crucible Gallery at the Ayala Triangle, Ayala Ave. cor. Makati Ave., Makati City.

The exhibit's title, says the artist, has references to astrology and relationships. Here, [illegible] and classic images coexist to edgy fantasies to be found.

Look at "St. Fishhead, Patron Saint of Doomsday." This one has a distinctly Boschean air about it.

The portrait of a red fathead with blue hair and violet robe may look at first like another extravaganza take on the "Mona Lisa." Moss says the image was actually based on a [illegible] (note the gloves) from a Flemish painting.

Red stick figures scroll in a green manicured landscape with a turquoise stream, while five nervades spin in the background, carrying some human figures along with [illegible] poles. Under cannons of rust-color fish, heads crowned crystal like whole pieces of ice actually accrete of the Holy Trinity.

"Allure of Beautiful People" is a Germaine of pink sky and silver-green ground with a snake as big as a chimpipe. In what appears to be a garden party, a cockatiel in a jeopardize hair, ruffled dress and high boots, seated in a high-backed jungle chair at a blue table, is talking to a topless housemaid with a green bird's head, holding a feather duster and a bird-cage.

Private theater

"The Expanse of Spirit" is an equally enigmatic tableau of two nudes, a human slender male and a chubby-chest female. The piece is dominated by red tempered by glazes of ochre, orange, gray and cell-white.

The woman, in dark shades and bloodied stiletto shoes, holding a long cigarette pipe that could be a Chinese paintbrush, is sitting on a sidewalk with three flat figures (actually a child's drawing manifested by the artist in his work). The man is holding up a piece of sea-

Turn to page 19

Everyday Pinoy culture . . .

From page 18

tive scenario of the Doomsday fears with a take-off from video games littered with Hollywood sci-fi lore. Even the digs into the smugness of Filipinos who adapted themselves to the escapist graphics of video games.

"In her new series, she picks up the essence of the Filipinos on the wishful invocations to the protecting spirits of the lowly among-saving Enlightened. She suggests that the [illegible] lies in the schizophrenia of shapes and the etched graphics.

"On the same level of vein, she takes up the popularity of the Marian icons as a figure of success for various personal needs.

"Overall, Tripal's works are a sly and impudent look into the extravagances of the Filipinos' imagination as a face-off during moments of crisis. The so-called resilience is, in fact, a [illegible] and a concentration upon Fun-realities.

". . . Dhiba Gabonia Tripal [is] a sensitive observer of the Filipino spirit."

Yes, she strikes that chord of collective memory that resonates in all of us Pinoys. Her images bring memories and shared values back to life, among reminders for us that our heritage is indeed, unique and special, and worth preserving.

E-mail the author at [illegible]@[illegible].com

THE ANTING-ANTING is a talisman from a small medallion worn around the neck to giant, talismanic proportions as it is emblazoned on the front of a T-shirt, possibly to ward off larger evils than its wearer

Ofelia Gelvezón Téqui's prints bring our collective memories and shared values back to life

HOME is where we all want to be in the end, after pursuing our individual paths to get there.

THE INAY Madonna and Child reflects the blind faith of the Filipino that the power of religious icons can perform miracles during times of need.

Everyday Pinoy culture writ large

IT'S a common misconception that preserving cultural heritage happens within a vacuum.

Preserving old buildings or historic towns as monuments is pointless when daily life is excluded from the heritage structures. Heritage goes beyond old buildings. Intangible customs and traditional landscapes includes the visual arts, music, literature and crafts. Business, cuisine and even our political and social history are part of heritage as well.

The ordinary is heritage, too. When we put in contrast, everyday street life is a reflection of our shared heritage that is the basis of our commendable Pinoy identity.

Brilliant color

Prints by Ofelia Gelvezón Téqui (on view until Oct. 5 at the Ateneo Gallery, XIII Ukay-Ukay, Fronda, Manila) mine images from our collective memory to show that tradition does provide the basis for us to make sense of our turbulent present.

The imagery of her prints reincarnate some of the deep-seated currents in the Pinoy collective memory, particularly Christian and folk religious beliefs. Although the images are rooted in the past, nostalgia is absent from her work, which is skillfully executed in brilliant color encaustic.

PRIDE OF PLACE

Augusto F. Villalon

The other misconception that she disproves is that culture is for the elite. Her images—among them existing outings, Mactannay, pinball machines—are all everyday objects that are part of the lives of the ordinary Pinoy. She digs into this reservoir of traditional Pinoy folk imagery and endows with intuitive social commentary on our present situation.

While each day brings our present personal situation closer toward floundering, her sense of humor diffuses the situation, a reaction typical of Pinoys when faced with difficult situations.

The childlike simplicity of her polychromed Madonnas cradling her babies reminds one of treasures of blind Filipino faith that the Blessed Virgin will always work miracles for those who believe.

The saving-aning takes on new meaning. No longer an amulet to hang around the neck, the item is blown up, enlarged and stenciled to take over entire T-shirt fronts. Thus, Gelvezón Téqui transforms it into a bigger, improved talisman with increased protective power for its bearer.

Her series of pinball machines presents heavenly rewards for those who have taken the time to acquire the skill to overcome the uncertainty of the game. Dropping an archer coin into the slot instantly offers a second chance. Nothing is ever lost.

Redemption and resilience

The theme running through her work is that redemption is always at hand, and that the Pinoy always bounces back.

At the exhibition notes state: "The proverbial resilience of the modern Filipino during times of crisis is the price de résistance in the humor and wit of the graphic works of Ofelia Gelvezón Téqui.

"In her earlier prints, she sees a subjec-

No child's play

This young marimba player could shame the experts

By Amado Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

THERE were reminiscences that Sunday afternoon at the Lucero's Concert in the Park. The opening crowd huddled under umbrellas or under the leaves and, along with the people around on both sides of the stage, lustily applauded this young marimba player.

He was Tristan "Tan Tan" Mendoza, 14, who was performing with confidence and brilliance, and assisted on the piano by his teacher, Ruby Soriano. The composition being interpreted was: no child's play, including Rimsky-Korsakov's "Flight of the Bumblebee," Chopin's "Fantasie Impromptu," Ito Fella's "Bayan Ko (Kare-kare)" and Santiago's "Medley from."

As an encore, young Mendoza and teacher Soriano played selections from "The Phantom of the Opera."

"You may not be aware of it when you talk to him (one-on-one) at first but does not look at you directly), but Tan Tan is a multi-talented, charming yet humble child. He is also a talented guitar who operates in the marimba, although he can play many other instruments. And he is good, too, in mathematics.

It seems that Tan Tan has impressive credentials to his name. He has already played the marimba at age five, and since then has won numerous national and international awards. He has a CD album which has been released internationally, and in 2001 he was invited to perform at the John F Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington DC.

Tan Tan, who is aware of his credentials, to the extent of how definitive best to the late Victor Mendoza (president of Lyceda Memorial Chapels) and to Belinda G. Mendoza, a financial consultant. The others are Ramsay, his aunt Sienna, and they are all musically talented.

Born with perfect pitch, Tan Tan was diagnosed to be autistic at the age of two. "This is a lifetime condition and it was devastating," recalls his mother Belinda. "But my husband took it positively. He said, 'Don't worry, our friends are still always here (his baby with us.'"

At the Montessori school for children with special needs, where Tan Tan first studied, the teachers noticed that he did not play with his schoolmates and preferred to be by himself.

He is now a Grade Eleven (the equivalent of third year high school) student at the Brentley International School.

Academically he's higher than his age, academically he is 18 years old," says Ge mother. "But when it comes to socialization, he is eight years old. So can be near normal, you know. I will do everything and leave the rest to God. God has a purpose for everything. As long as I'm here, I will do everything to help him."

Tan Tan retains his love in full measure: "I obey her instructions always. I will do everything to please her."

"At the Autism Society Philippines, we call his condition 'differently abled,'" adds Belinda.

"He has physical and mental challenges," observes his music teacher Soriano. "But Tan's 'Tin Baby' "Think thinking is compartmentalized. If I'm late for the session, Don't start your with him."

He laughs. "Outside of music I always argue with him. Do his therapy. There are some compositions he does not like to play. So I explain why the piece is important. For example, he did not want to play "Pie (Pancreas of the Opera) encore, but since we were in public, he obeyed."

An extensively up-close and personal with Tan Tan Mendoza, however, reveals that he is a young boy capable of wanting to have a point and rival only beyond his years (although at one point he started running inside the restaurant). And he speaks with affecting sincerity: "I want to be an inspiration for other autistic children."

FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD marimba player Tristan "Tan Tan" Mendoza, assisted by mentor Ruby Soriano on the piano

DLSU Chorale wins gold in Hungary

THE DLSU Chorale bested 10 other international choirs when it won First Place in the Folkloric Special Category during the Bela Bartok 21st International Choir Competition held in Debrecen, Hungary.

The week-long competition took place from July 27 and culminated on Aug. 1 showcased the best and acclaimed choruses from around the world.

Coming from a series of victories in the US (where the competitions, MLSU Chorale sang their way to victory in Hungary. Their award-winning repertoire included a vibrant rendition of the traditional love song "Kundendo," and perfectly arranged liberation ballads and Dundeln, true melodies of ethnic origin in the Philippines.

To celebrate their victory, De La Salle University-Manila boasted a homecoming concert for the DLSU Chorale last Sept. 14 at the Don Enrique Yuchengco Hall.

The DLSU Chorale, under the baton of Rodolfo Dalmenares since 1987, have performed in Europe and the USA and won various first prize awards in local and international choir competitions.

"DON'T Look Back," by Keiko Shoda

'Twilight Samurai' opens Japanese film festival

THE FIRST full-scale period film directed by accomplished Japanese director Yoji Yamada, "Twilight Samurai" (Tasogare Seibei, 2002) will be featured in Gigs for 2004, the Japanese Film Festival. This film was nominated for the Foreign Language Film category at the 76th Oscar Awards.

"Twilight Samurai" is a story about a low-level samurai family headed by a widower raising two daughters and his mother, who's hoping into wealthy. The widow senior in this film's story line for Seibei Iwasaki himself has drifted from his professional process. He saves his time in a stable and an insect cage makes. Whether is called on to defend the honor of his clan, he still is reconstructed although his heart is not in it.

Preview screenings had been shown at the SM Film Festival on Sept. 7-11. The film banned officially ends off with an invitational screening on Sept. 29 at the Cultural Center of the Philippines Little Theater at 7 p.m. "Twilight Samurai" will be shown at the CCP Dream Theater from Sept. 30-Oct. 3. The Peddlers, Oct. 6, and at the SM Megamall, Oct. 7-12.

A highlight of the opening ceremony is the screening of "Waterboys" (2001). Other films to be featured are Akihiko Shiota's "Don't Look Back (Sabu, makioma Ikou, 1996)," Kazuyuki Izutsuya's "Give It All (Zenbu Dasanasai, 1998)," Hiroshi Hashiguchi's "Hush (2001)" and Takashi Yamazaki's "Juvenile (2000)."

Gigs for 2004 is sponsored by The Japan Foundation Manila in cooperation with the SM Film Institute, Cultural Center of the Philippines, The Peddlers and SM Megamall.

Admission is free. Call 8183103 or e-mail@fdn.org.ph

Fresh sounds from the PPO

By Antonio C. Ilio
Contributor

EUGENE Castillo made his much-expected debut as the opening concert of the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra's current season as its new music director and principal conductor.

Perhaps because the PPO is under the awarding of a new conductor, the audience was in a warm presence, applauding generously in between the four movements of Brahms' Fourth Symphony in utter disregard of the artistic norm that disapproves of such gesture.

Under Castillo, the PPO showed a fresh symphonic sound, with a keen sensitivity to ensemble blending.

In a previous conversation, the conductor mentioned that he intends to introduce "new" works—meaning works that are rarely performed on the local concert stage—in the first half of each concert program, with the last half devoted to standard symphonic works.

The program of this season's opening concert followed this format. Perhaps as a salute to the countries where his cultural roots lie, he chose the works of Filipino and American composers: Angel Peña (1923-1982) and Samuel Barber (1910-1981), to grace the first half of the concert, with Brahms' (1833-1897) Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98 completing the last half.

Eclectic work

Peña's Triunfo: A Symphonic Cycle (1984), which received its world premiere performance, was a testament to eclectic musicianship of Peñafloff and Ravel could easily be discerned, meaning the work with a universal character that transcends the Indian cultural orientation of the work upon which the program is based.

The work is a compact single movement in three parts that follow a schizophrenic disposition, sometimes, to point dynamics underneath either in slow or fast passing, peaceful terms or persistently adventurous moods, and heightened tension or abandoned relaxation. The work exploited the atmosphere in terms of orchestration, which Castillo swing beautifully, wielding his baton so emphatically.

Afterwards, he properly acknowledged Peña, who ascended the stage and received a set. Peña is one of the few remaining senior members of the League of Filipino Composers who still actively composes. One hopes this inclusion of a Philippine work in the PPO's concerts would continue, as it was vigorously done in the CCP's early years.

The works of the American composer, Samuel Barber, are seldom heard on the local concert stage. The conductor informed the audience that the Adagio for Strings was the first piece he had ever conducted at the CCP 15 years ago.

Indeed, conducting it again into a nostalgic "Coming Home," which was the apt title for this concert. There was nostalgia, too, in listening to the silken strains of the string section of the PPO that throbbed once more with life!

Castillo Lopez Molina has obviously transformed her vocal instrument from a fragmentary mezzo to an elegant lyric. Too bad, it did not measure up to the spirit demand of the piece. The orchestra practically drowned it. But rather than having our lost voice, Lopez Molina maximized the integrity of its lovely lyric sheen.

Her voice is perhaps still in transition, technically speaking. Surely she has dressed the "Manila sound," the forced-out vocal orientation that her voice sported while still in Manila, in less of a more mature cantilena that could become full or mature in due time.

It is interesting to note that the late soprano, Eleanor Barber, for whom Barber composed Knoxville: Summer of 1915, Op.24, started out as a light soprano, her voice described as "sweet as an angel." But later, she acquired a spinto sheen, but even then retaining "sweet but full." By the time Barber composed the song, her voice had already the weight to evoke the earthy textures of Barber's oeuvre.

In terms of balance between the symphonic and vocal sounds—but not compromising the artistic standard of expressing the symphonic hair of the piece—seemed impossible for conductor Castillo to achieve. Diction was indistinct. There is no doubt, however, that in due time, Lopez Molina will become a celebrated lyric soprano. Already, her vocal instrumentation is a big accomplishment.

Big distraction

Regarding the visual projection that accompanied the performances on the stage, one can simply say it was a miniature, with an useful impact at all. If the idea was to integrate the visual and aural arts, just to intensify the narrative, the projection was an utter fail.

Under new conductor Eugene Castillo, the orchestra sported a revivified symphonic sound, with a keen sensitivity to ensemble blending

MAESTRO Eugene Castillo wielding the baton

Under new conductor Eugene Castillo, the orchestra sported a revivified symphonic sound, with a keen sensitivity to ensemble blending

MAESTRO Eugene Castillo wielding the baton

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2004 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

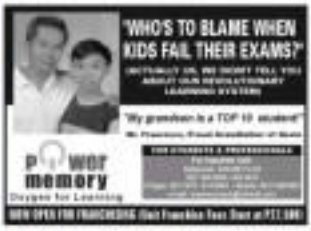
LIFESTYLE

STEPHEN Fennell

KODÁLY Colmenar

JONATHAN Velasco

President Macapagal-Arroyo awards boxers and criminal informants millions and Malacañang photo-ops, while slashing funds for Pinoy artists who have won plaudits abroad



MANILA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

In praise of an unsubsidized orchestra

By Pablo A. Tariman
Contributor

AFTER that fairly well-received opening concert of the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra (PPO) last week, music lovers should find time to hear Filipino-American cellist Stephen Fennell play as soloist of the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra on Friday, Sept. 24, at the Philamlife Theater.

The conductor is Isabel Colmenar, who passed the test in two exciting concerts in Manila—Bach 3 with Cecile Licad and the San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra (SMPO) in 2002, and Saint-Saëns' 2 with Licad with MPO last year.

MPO is the name orchestra which accompanied Andrea Bocelli, who broke box-office records for classical concerts in Manila when a whopping 30,000 people (from the elite and the lower) attended his one evening of love songs and arias at the Araneta Coliseum early this year.

The MPO under Colmenar is a curious thing. Unlike the PPO and the SMPO, which are subsidized by government and corporate funds, respectively, MPO survives by the skin of its fingernails, says spunk.

Colmenar said it's only his passion for music that keeps the orchestra alive. "When you love something you do and you feel that you are contributing to improving the quality of life of Filipinos, you just can't stop just because times are difficult," said Colmenar, who used to tie with the artistic director of the PPO.

"But we are used to hard times because unlike the San Miguel Philharmonic or the Philippine Philharmonic, we derive without subsidy from the government and corporate entities. In fact, we have to do a lot of pop stunts to support our season of classical music."

Freaks of nature

Colmenar noted that other countries use classical musicians to lure tourists. In Singapore, they write Richard Bodo Jr. and tickle Ye Ye Mo to play there and promote tourism. "But to our country, classical musicians are treated like freaks of nature and always have to beg for support. That is the sad part."

Jonathan Velasco, a leading choral conductor, businessman and the only Filipino to sit in the jury of the choral Olympics in Bremen, Germany, will close the MPO season with operatic arias. He told the media that President Macapagal-Arroyo should stop aiming for gold medals in sports and instead focus on the arts.

"President Arroyo should realize that it's in the arts that Filipinos really excel, not in sports," says Velasco, who trained as a member of the Philippine Madrigal Singers, which had won golds in various choral Olympics in the '80s.

A Filipino choir also struck gold in the recent choral Olympics in Bremen. The UST Singers has become the toast of Europe in the last several years, winning grand prize after grand prize in choral festivals. The Bicol, meanwhile, has recently regained its winning form in Spain. Leo Isidoro is so fit the First and only Filipino to win the Tony Award in USA and the Laurence Olivier Prize in London for a leading role in a Broadway and West End musicals.

"In the last many years, it's only the boxers and some inventions who get millions in cash incentives and other remunerations in proper media-covered ceremonies in Malacañang," said Velasco.

A search sought after choral specialist in Asia, Velasco has been asked to judge in the 2nd Choral Olympics in Rome, Roma, the 9th International Chorus Competition in Bratislava, Hungary, the 7th International Choir Concert of Flanders Musanovelties in Belgium and the 16th Tolosa International Choral Competition in Tolosa, Spain.

He criticized the alleged order of Malacañang suspending support for all cultural activities as part of the government's austerity program to check the fiscal crisis.

"Music is part of the way of life of Filipinos and to tell them to stop making music to save on costs is like telling them to stop breathing," said Velasco, who graduated with distinction at the Berliner Hoch's musikschule in Germany.

Among the country's distinguished musicians in the art who have put the country on the cultural map are Cecile Licad, the child prodigy who won the Leventritt Gold Medal in New York if the only medal won in Van Cliburn and Gary Bradbury; Ramon Arrieta, winner of the Jose Iturbi piano competition in Spain; tenor Conrad Gonzaga, winner of an international voice competition in Germany; tenor Raul Pelayo, winner of the Luciano Pavarotti contest in Philadelphia; and soprano Ambon Penano, winner of a voice competition in Spain and Germany with Placido Domingo and Jose Carreras on the jury.

The closest President comes get to the music scene was when she inhibited to mumble a concert of Licad with the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra in August last year. She cancelled at the last minute after sending advance presidential guests to the Philamlife Theater.

It didn't occur perhaps to the President that Licad—described by piano czar Martha Argerich of Argentina as the greatest pianist of her generation—is the baptismal godchild of Imelda Marcos, but late more.

'No fire'

The classic quote of the week is from PPO conductor Eugene Castillo who said in a CCP-sponsored arts forum that Filipino artists lack "fire."

Castillo, who was recently given a Filipino citizenship (he is an American citizen), quoted a poem from Robert Frost, "From what I've gathered of desire/ I hold with those who favor fire." After which Castillo asked, "Where is the fire in the Filipino artist?"

It didn't occur to Castillo that he had been given a rare chance before of conducting Licad, who had been described by the Chicago Sun Times as "one of the flaming talents that comes once or twice in every generation."

If only for his statement, I am boycotting the PPO season.